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THE

LETTERS

OF

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ

Carnavalet Edition

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LETTERS NOT PREVIOUSLY
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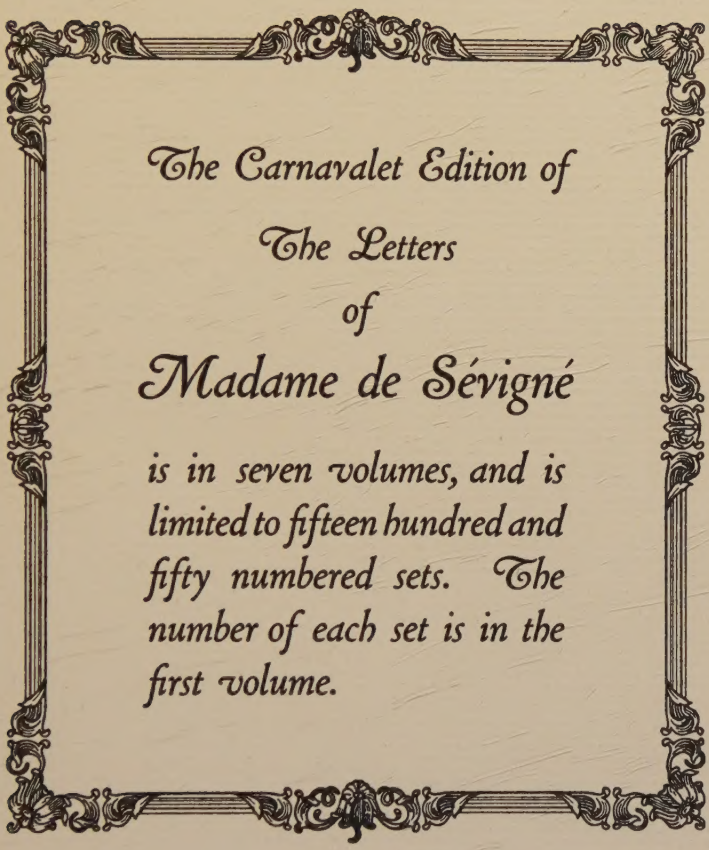
ENGLISH

IN SEVEN VOLUMES

VOLUME III


The Carnavalet Edition of
The Letters
of
Madame de Sévigné
is in seven volumes, and is limited to fifteen hundred and fifty numbered sets. The number of each set is in the first volume.

FRANÇOISE MARGUERITE
DE SEVIGNÉ,
COMTESSE DE GRIGNAN.

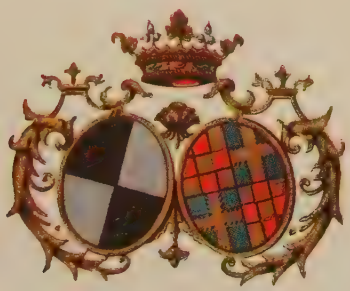
Peint par Mignard. *Gravé par C.L. Masquelier.*

THE

LETTERS

OF

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ



WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

A. EDWARD NEWTON

PHILADELPHIA

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THE LETTERS OF MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ

LETTER 332

From Madame la Marquise DE SÉVIGNÉ *to her Daughter Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, August 28, 1675.

If I had the means of sending letters to you every day, I could easily contrive to write them. I sometimes do so even now, though my letters do not go; but the pleasure of writing is reserved for you alone; to everyone else I write, because I must. I have further particulars to relate to you respecting M. de Turenne. Madame d'Elbeuf [1], who is for a few days at the Cardinal de Bouillon's, invited me to dine with them yesterday, and to share in their grief. Madame de La Fayette was likewise there; the purpose of our meeting was fully answered, for there was not a dry eye among us. Madame d'Elbeuf had a picture of the hero, admirably executed. All his people arrived at eleven o'clock; the poor creatures were already in deep mourning, and bathed in tears: three gentlemen came in who were ready to die at sight of the picture; their cries pierced every heart; they could not utter a word; his footmen, his pages, his trumpeters, were all in tears, and made everybody else weep to see them. The first who was able to speak, answered our mournful questions, and we prevailed on him to relate the manner of his death. It seems he was desirous of confessing, and when he retired for

[1] Sister of Cardinal de Bouillon.

that purpose, he gave his orders for the evening, and was to have communicated the next day, which was Sunday, when he expected to give battle. He mounted on horseback at two o'clock the Saturday, after having taken a little refreshment, and as he had many people with him, he left them all at about thirty paces from the hill, and said to young d'Elbeuf, "Nephew, stay you there: you move round me so much, that I shall be known." M. Hamilton, who happened to be near the place where he was going, said to him, "Sir, come this way if you please, the enemy's fire is directed to the place in which you are." "You are right, Sir," replied M. de Turenne; "I would not willingly be killed to-day; this will do extremely well." He had scarcely turned his horse, when he saw St. Hilaire, who, coming up to him with his hat in his hand, desired him to cast his eye on a battery he had just perceived, pointing to the place. M. de Turenne turned back, and at that very instant, without having time to stop his horse, he had his arm and part of his body torn to pieces by the same ball that carried off St. Hilaire's arm and hand in which he held his hat. The gentleman, who was watching him attentively, did not see him fall, for his horse ran away with him as far as the spot where he had left young d'Elbeuf; he was leaning with his face over the pummel of the saddle. The moment his horse stopped, this great man fell off into the arms of his people, who were gathered round him, twice opened wide his eyes, moved his lips a little, and sank to eternal rest. Think of his death, and of part of his heart being carried away! His people immediately burst into loud cries and lamentations, but M. Hamilton quieted them as well as he could, and had young d'Elbeuf removed, who had thrown himself upon his uncle's body frantic with grief, and would not be dragged from it without violence. A cloak was immediately thrown over the body, and it was placed by the side of a hedge, where they kept watch over it in silence till a carriage could be sent for, to carry it to his tent: there it was met by M. de Lorges, M. de Roye, and several others, who were ready

to expire with grief; but they were obliged to restrain themselves, and think of the important business that had devolved on them. A military service was performed in the camp, where tears and sorrow were the mourning: the officers, however, had each a crêpe scarf, the drums were covered with the same, they beat only a single stroke, the soldiers marched with their pikes trailing and pieces reversed; but the cries and lamentations of a whole army cannot be described without emotion. His two nephews assisted at this mournful ceremony, I leave you to judge in what condition. M. de Roye, though badly wounded, would be carried thither. I suppose the poor Chevalier de Grignan was overwhelmed with grief. When the body was removed from the camp, to be brought to Paris, the same scene of grief was renewed, and in every place through which it passed, nothing was heard but lamentations: at Langres, however, they exceeded even this; the bier was met by more than two hundred of the principal inhabitants in mourning, followed by the common people, and all the clergy in sacerdotal habits. In the town a solemn service was performed, and they all voluntarily entered into a contribution towards the defraying of the expenses, which amounted to five thousand francs; for they conducted the body as far as the next town. What say you to these natural marks of affection, founded on the most extraordinary merit? He is to be brought to St. Denis this evening; the people are all gone to meet the body at a place about two leagues distant, from whence they will conduct it to a chapel, where it is to be deposited for the present; there will be a service performed at St. Denis till that at Nôtre-Dame is celebrated, which will be a solemn one. Such was our entertainment at the Cardinal's; we dined, as you may suppose, melancholy enough, and afterwards did nothing but sigh till four o'clock. Cardinal de Bouillon mentioned you, and took upon him to answer for you, that, had you been in Paris, you would have made one of our sad party: I assured him that you took no small share in his grief. He intends to answer both

your letter and M. de Grignan's; he desired me to say a thousand kind things to you, and so did the worthy d'Elbeuf, who, as well as her son, has lost everything. It was a good idea to undertake thus to tell you what you know already as well as myself; but these originals struck me, and I was glad to show you in what way we forgot M. de Turenne in this part of the world.

M. de La Garde told me the other day, that in the enthusiasm of the wonders which were related of the Chevalier de Grignan, he had advised his brothers [1] to bestir themselves on the occasion, to support his interest at least for the present year; and that he found them both very well disposed to do extraordinary things. This good La Garde is at Fontainebleau, from whence he is to return in three days, to set out at last; for he longs to be gone, though courtiers in general seem to be very leaden-heeled. The situation of poor Madame de Sanzei is really deplorable; we know nothing yet respecting her husband; he is neither dead nor alive, wounded nor prisoner. His people do not take the least notice of him in their letters. M. de La Trousse, after having mentioned the report of his being killed (this was the day of the action), has never since mentioned a syllable about him, either to Madame de Sanzei or to Coulanges [2], so that we are quite at a loss what to say to this distracted woman; and yet it is cruel to let her remain in this state of uncertainty: for my part, I am persuaded her husband is killed; the dust and blood must probably have disfigured him so much, as to cause him to be unrecognizable, and he has been stripped with the rest of the slain. Or he was perhaps killed at a distance from any of the rest; or by the country-people on the road, and thrown into a hedge. I think it is more probable that he has met with some such melancholy fate, than that he has been taken prisoner without a word having been heard respecting him.

[1] The Coadjutor of Arles, and the Abbé de Grignan.

[2] Madame de Sévigné was sister of M. de Coulanges, and M. de La Trousse was first cousin to both.

And now, my dear, I must tell you that the Abbé thinks my journey so necessary, that I no longer oppose it; I shall not have him always with me, and therefore I ought to take advantage of his good intentions towards me. It will be only a trip of two months, for the good Abbé is not the least disposed to pass the winter there. He expresses himself very sincerely on the subject, and you know I am always the dupe of everything that has the appearance of sincerity: so much the worse for those who deceive me. I conceive that it would be very dull there in the winter; long evenings may be compared to long marches for tediousness. I was not dull the winter you were with me: you, who are young, might have felt so, but do you remember our readings? It is true, that if everything had been taken away that surrounded the table, and even the book too, it is impossible to tell what would have become of me. Providence will arrange everything. I treasure up all your sayings: we get out of our dullness as we do out of bad roads: we see no one stop short in the middle of a month, because he has not the courage to go through it; it is like dying, we see no one who does not know how to keep out of this dilemma: there are parts in your letters which I neither can nor will forget. Are my friends Corbinelli and M. de Vardes with you? I hope they are. In that case, I dare say, there has been no deficiency of conversation among you; you have talked incessantly of the state of affairs, of the death of M. de Turenne, and are at a loss to guess what will be the consequences of it: in fact, you are just like ourselves, though you are in Provence. M. de Barillon supped here last night. The conversation turned upon M. de Turenne, and the universal grief occasioned by his loss: he entered largely into his virtues, his love of truth, his love of virtue for its own sake, and his reward in the practice of it: he finished this eulogium with adding, that no one could love and esteem M. de Turenne without being the better for it. His company and conversation inspired such hatred of deceit and double-dealing, as raised his friends above the gen-

erality of mankind. In this number the Chevalier was particularly distinguished as one for whom this great man showed more than common esteem and affection, and who, on his side, was one of his greatest admirers. We shall never see his equal in any age; I do not think we are quite blind in the present day, at least those I meet are not so, and this perhaps is boasting that I keep good company. But I must tell you one more word of M. de Turenne, which I heard yesterday. You know Pertuis well, and his adoration and attachment to M. de Turenne; as soon as he heard of his death, he wrote His Majesty the following note: "Sire, I have lost M. de Turenne; I feel my heart unable to support this blow: and being incapable of serving your Majesty as I ought to do, I humbly request your permission to resign my government of Courtrai." Cardinal de Bouillon prevented the letter from being given to the King; but, fearing he might come in person, he informed His Majesty of the effect Pertuis' grief had on him. The King appeared to enter with great goodness and indulgence into his sentiments, and told Cardinal de Bouillon that he esteemed Pertuis the more for this mark of attachment to his friend and benefactor[1], and that he thought him too honest a man not to discharge his duty in whatever situation he was in. This is a specimen of grief for this hero. He had a patrimony of forty thousand livres a year; and M. Boucherat says, that after all his debts, and the several legacies he has bequeathed, are paid, there will not remain more than ten thousand. These are the vast treasures he had amassed during a service of fifty years! Adieu, my dearest child, I embrace you a thousand times, and with inexpressible tenderness.

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[1] He had been Captain of the Guard to M. de Turenne.

LETTER 333

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, August 30, 1675.

I have determined to leave this place on the fourth of next month; I shall go directly to Orléans, where I shall find M. d'Harouïs, and where we shall embark on Sunday, after mass. I shall write to you on Wednesday, on setting out; I shall remain some time at Nantes, and shall then proceed to *The Rocks*. My return is fixed, certainly for November, if I live. I very much regret the interruption of our correspondence, which will be a little irregular: but life is full of events that wound the heart.

I am just returned from the service performed for M. de Turenne at St. Denis. Madame d'Elbeuf came to fetch me, and Cardinal de Bouillon invited me so pressingly that I could not refuse. The ceremony was extremely mournful: the corpse was placed in the middle of the church. It arrived there the night before, with such show of sorrow, that M. Boucherat, who received it, and who watched with it all night, was almost dead himself with weeping. Not only the afflicted family and the domestics were in mourning and in tears; nothing but sighs and sobs were to be heard around. Of his friends were present Messieurs Boucherat, de Harlai, de Barillon, and de Meaux. Madame d'Elbeuf was almost in hysterics from grief: it is impossible to doubt this poor woman's sorrow. It was a melancholy spectacle to see all his guards standing, every one with his *pertuisane* on his shoulder, round the corpse they had so ill defended, and at the conclusion of mass to see them carry the bier, and place it in the chapel over the great altar, where it is deposited. The ceremony of this removal was very affecting; everyone was in tears, and many were not able to restrain their cries. At last we got into the chapel, which Madame d'Elbeuf filled with the most piercing lamentations. When this was over, we

returned to a very melancholy repast at Cardinal de Bouillon's, who would have us come there; he has begged me in pity to return this evening at six o'clock, to take him and Madame d'Elbeuf to Vincennes: they have talked very much of you. The Cardinal says he will write to you to-day; but I shall close my packet before I go there, that I may not be uneasy about returning early: the moon will light us wherever the Cardinal pleases. I shall perhaps go to-morrow to Livry to enjoy a walk by moonlight, and to take leave of my charming Abbey. The Abbé has been there these three days: he talks of nothing now but retirement; it is the fashion.

What say you to the Prince, who has raised the siege of Haguenau in the same manner as he put the enemy to flight last year at Oudenarde? This is a fact. I have heard no news from Fontainebleau except that four tragedies of Corneille's, four of Racine's, and two comedies of Molière's, are to be played there. I cannot forgive Cavoye for having gone to Fontainebleau this morning in preference to St. Denis. Adieu, my dear child; embrace me I conjure you, and tell me no more that you do not deserve my tenderest affection. Why should you not deserve it, if it be true that you love me? On what other account can you be unworthy of it? Embrace me once more, my dear; and be contented to let me love you more than myself, since you own you love me a little.

Poor Sanzei's people are returned, and though his body has not been found, they believe he has been killed. They are preparing his wife to hear the sad intelligence, without yet daring to make her put on mourning. The Comtesse de Fiesque was thus situated for three months with her first husband, the Marquis of Piennes, who may yet return.

LETTER 334

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, September 4, 1675.

Madame de Puisieux has written me word, that, hearing it was my intention to set out yesterday, she advised me to defer my journey till Monday. I acquiesced, without any further reasoning, and so, my dear, here am I till then. The Court returns on Friday. The siege of Haguenau is raised[1]: matters are far from turning out so badly as you foresaw; though Montécuculli has only abandoned his designs to embarrass the Prince, who, finding himself somewhat overmatched, has retired towards Schlestat. M. de Lorraine[2] in writing to his daughter[3] on the subject of the last defeat (at Consarbruck) never mentions Maréchal de Créqui in other terms than the *honest Maréchal, honest Créqui.* There is a certain malignant air in that letter very much resembling the turn of mind of *His Highness my father.* It is to be wished that the attendants of the dead, or reputed dead, did not return again, for M. de Sanzei's people give a shocking account of that affair. We had two thousand men foraging, and there were but five thousand to twenty-two thousand. The river was supposed impassable, whereas it was fordable in three different places, by which the enemy's army crossed over, and attacked ours in flank. La Trousse gave his opinion upon the matter, but he was not heard. The Maréchal fought like a man beside himself, and when he saw all was lost threw himself into Tréves, which he defends like

[1] M. de Matthieu, who commanded in Haguenau, was Lieutenant-Colonel of the Marine Regiment, and a very distinguished officer. He had said several times before the place was besieged, "As long as Matthieu continues to exist, Haguenau shall be the King's." He became Colonel of Marines on the 29th of August, 1675, that is, a few days after the raising of the siege.

[2] Charles IV., Duc de Lorraine.

[3] Anne de Lorraine, Comtesse de Lillebonne.

another Oroondates. He saved a great number of the troops; the rout and confusion were greater than the slaughter. M. de Sanzei's body cannot be found; his people saw him rush into the middle of one of the enemy's squadrons, known by the name of *sans quartier*[1], crying out that he desired no quarter; he fought a considerable time; the remains of his regiment rallied, but not a word was heard of him: can it be supposed but that he was left dead upon the field of battle, where there was no opportunity of looking for him immediately, nor probability of knowing him afterwards? Poor Madame de Sanzei came here on Saturday about seven in the morning, just as I was in my carriage to go to Livry. I immediately alighted and did not leave her for the whole day. She expected to have met her husband's people with his equipage, which came in about an hour afterwards; it was enough to make one weep to see such a train of poor, meagre, woe-begone wretches. She is to set out in a few days for Autri: she is greatly afflicted, and her tears are those of real sorrow. She was advised not to go into mourning yet. I could not help smiling at such a ridiculous idea. M. de Sanzei will return with Enoch and Elie, St. Jean-Baptiste, the late Marquis de Piennes, and the Marquis d'Estrées. What folly to doubt of his death; and, at last, to pull off the crêpe-band[2], and be with child again! The only way to be always ready to receive a lost husband, is never to marry again.

Lannoi, that is, Madame de Montrevel, is in a great rage; after hanging for a month to the ears of the King and *Quanto*, begging for the Royal Regiment with enthusiasm, as she does everything, it has been given to the Marquis de Montrevel[3], her husband's uncle, who has already deprived them of the Lieutenancy-General (of Bresse). It is not known what measures he has taken,

[1] i.e. who neither received nor gave quarter, like the Hussar Regiment of Death in the Prussian army.

[2] It was at that time the custom for widows to wear a band of crêpe over the forehead.

[3] Since Maréchal of France.

nor what manœuvre he adopted; but at the time he appeared the least active, this desirable regiment was given him: it is true, he is brave to rashness; it is he who was in love with Madame de Coulanges, who is handsome, and well made; I forgot that he is at law with his nephew, and that he is his mortal enemy, for it is a very divided family.

The Chevalier de Coislin[1] has returned home in consequence of the death of M. de Turenne, declaring that he could no longer serve after having lost that great man; that his health was greatly impaired, and that it was only with a view of following that hero, that he had undertaken the last campaign; but now that he was gone, he should retire to Bourbon. The King, being informed of this, has already disposed of his regiment, and declares, that if it were not in consideration of his brothers, he would send him to the Bastille. I think you have now had enough of the marvellous; methinks you grow weary of it, and so I shall furnish you with no more. It was your own desire to hear some extraordinary adventures, your wish was granted; and now, on a sudden you cry out, "Hold! in mercy have done."

Faucher, of the house of Estrées, came to see me yesterday; he is returning to Rome by way of Savoie. We had a great deal of chat together; and he related to me the whole quarrel between the Pope and the Ambassador; he convinced me that *Marseilles* was still at a considerable distance from a Cardinal's hat: in short, after having had a great deal of talk about Portugal and Savoie, and a thousand other things, he desired to see your portrait. He is a connoisseur of painting. I wish M. de Grignan and you could have witnessed the unaffected admiration with which he was struck, the praises he bestowed on the likeness, and particularly on the excellence of the painting on the head which starts from the canvas, the neck which

[1] Charles-César du Cambout de Coislin, Knight of Malta, after quitting the King's service, retired from the Court and the world, and gave himself up to the strictest devotion.

seems to breathe, and the figure which advances: in short, he stood gazing like a fool for half an hour. I told him I would show him St. Géran's portrait, which I thought better painted; he has seen it, and I expected he would have beaten me; he called me *ignorant*; and what was worse, *woman*. He says the features are masterly, and what I considered as the worst parts of the portrait became the greatest beauties in his description. Here was colouring! there was brilliancy! Here the flesh seemed to yield to the touch! there the head and neck projected from the canvas, as if offering to meet you! you would have died with laughing at his manner of admiring everything. He has made so great a fuss about it, that M. de Louvigny came yesterday, more for the sake of seeing your portrait, than visiting me. He was charmed with it. I want to carry it about with me. How very truly did I speak the other day when I assured you that if any person was in love with me, he might esteem himself happy to be as much beloved by me in return as this dear resemblance is!

I fear the Prince is ill; I think I heard some such report. We are so far from having obliged Montécuculli to repass the Rhine, that he has drawn us towards Schlestat, and obliged us to abandon Lower Alsace. Maréchal de Créqui goes on like a demon at Tréves. His lady is so certain that Sanzei is there with him, that Madame de Sanzei dares not put on mourning, till the end of the siege has determined it. M. de St. Thou, going with thirty horse to reconnoitre the enemy's motions, fell in with upwards to two hundred cavalry; he believed they were ours, and advanced too far: he was immediately deserted by his men; the enemy offered him quarter, but he answered, he would have none; upon which he was instantly cut to pieces. This was a very silly exit; but it has made his sister and her ugly husband the richest couple in France. I can easily guess how you have been overwhelmed with compliments on account of your two brothers-in-law[1]: the echoes that

[1] The Chevalier de Grignan, and the Coadjutor of Arles, who had lately signalised themselves, one by his behaviour in the field, and

repeat for a month afterwards, like those at Oulioules, are very troublesome. I am of your opinion that you would have had much less to do with a coward and a fool. Madame de Coëtquen[1] is not worthy of feeling grief so long as she does. About two years ago, she took a little portrait of M. de Turenne from Madame d'Elbeuf, who used to wear it upon her arm. Madame d'Elbeuf asked her for it several times; she always told her, she had lost it, but we guess it is not lost to everyone. Ah, illustrious hero, is it thus then thou art to be sacrificed! But it is not the first instance of a great man being injured, when he is no longer in the zenith of his power.

Madame de Vaubrun is at present with our Sisters of St. Marie; she is almost idiotic, and makes a jest of everything that Father St. Marthe[2], her confessor, says to her: she has had her husband's[3] body brought into the church, and the service performed for it was more magnificent than that for M. de Turenne at St. Denis. She has his heart preserved in a small case, and takes it out and handles it, and weeps over it, every day; there are two candles constantly burning before it. She passes all her time from dinner to supper without stirring; and when they tell her that she has been there for seven hours, she is hardly to be persuaded that it is above half an hour. In short, she is under no sort of discipline, and it is expected she will lose her senses. Madame de Langeron is still inconsolable: if these afflictions continue, you will have reason to be satisfied[4]. It was affirmed yesterday that the Emperor had caused a service to be said for M. de Turenne.

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the other by the harangue he had had the honour of addressing to the King.

[1] Madame de Coëtquen had very ill kept a secret of importance, that M. de Turenne had been weak enough to intrust her with. She was suspected of having given the portrait to the Chevalier de Lorraine.

[2] General of the Oratory.

[3] Who was killed on the first of August, at the battle of Altenheim.

[4] It appears that Madame de Grignan had no opinion of grief which was not violent and lasting.

LETTER 335

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, September 6, 1675.

I am setting out, my dear child, extremely melancholy at the thought of removing to a greater distance from you, and of having our correspondence interrupted for some days. I leave some of my domestics sick; but I shall have an opportunity of experiencing what it is, not to be served according to my fancy, and to live a little without attendants. I shall be pleased with ascertaining the docility of my temper; and shall follow the examples of courage and reason which you give me. Does not Madame de Coulanges effect wonders, to spend her time in so melancholy a way at Lyons without repining? It would be a fine thing, indeed, if I were only able to live with people I am pleased with! I shall remember your lectures; I shall amuse myself with paying my debts, and eating my food; I shall think much of you; I shall read, walk, write, and receive your letters. Alas! life passes away but too swiftly; part of it is consumed everywhere.

I carry with me an infinite number of remedies, good or bad; they are all well recommended, and prescribed to me by my neighbours and friends. I hope, however, this magazine of medicines will be of little use to me, for I am extremely well in health. I went to Livry alone, the day before yesterday, and had a delightful walk with the moon: there was no dew; I was there from six in the evening till midnight, and find myself not the worse for this little indiscretion. It was a duty I owed to my charming Abbey, and the lovely Diana, to bid them adieu. I might have gone to Chantilly with a very pleasant party, but I did not think myself at liberty to take the excursion, and have deferred it to the spring. I have just been to Mignard's, to see Louvigny's portrait: it is a speaking likeness, but I did not see Mignard: he was painting Ma-

dame de Fontevrault, whom I saw through a hole in the door; I did not think her handsome: the Abbé Têtu was jesting freely with her. The Villars peeped through the hole in the door with me: we were very merry.

The Prince, who has raised the siege of Haguenau, is a little surprised to find himself obliged to be on the defensive, and to be intrenched on the side of Schlestat: the gout and the month of October will not contribute to make him very comfortable there. I am uneasy about my son: it seems to me as if I were going to have my head in a sack for ten or twelve days; and you judge rightly that I should not leave Paris at this important time without very good reasons. St. Thou dreamed the night before he was killed, that he had had a quarrel with the Prince of Orange, and that he had said so many rude things to him, that the Prince consigned him to his guards. He told this dream, and it was by these guards that he was killed, foolishly enough, for he would not accept quarter, though he was alone against two hundred. It was a very ridiculous indiscretion. All the world laughs at him, notwithstanding Voiture has taught us, that it is very uncivil to laugh at the dead. Poor Madame de Sanzei flatters herself with vain hopes that her husband is not dead, and will wait till the siege of Tréves is terminated, before she puts on mourning.

Adieu, my dearest, I cannot tell you how much I am yours; though I am more apt than you to express what I feel.

LETTER 336

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Monday, September 9, 1675.

Adieu, my dearest child, I am just getting into my carriage. I leave Paris for some time, with the vexation of no longer receiving your letters so regularly as usual, nor those of my son, for whom I am under great apprehen-

sions, not so much on account of the Prince of Orange being so near, as on account of M. de Luxembourg, who is *in my son's army*, and whose fingers itch violently for an engagement. Alas! do you remember our jest, that poor M. de Turenne was *in your brother's army*? In short, our correspondence will now be all in confusion; and I fear I shall no longer be able to contribute towards your amusements, for all the trifles I used to send you will now be reduced to nothing: so that, if you have any love for me, you will do well to throw my letters by unopened. I am going with the good Abbé and Marie; I have two servants on horseback, and six horses: I shall go by way of Orléans and Nantes, and shall write to you upon the road: this is one of my weaknesses, as Monceaux says.

I never met with so adorable a creature as d'Hacqueville. I know not how the rest of the family may be; but for him, I do not think he has his fellow: I recommended the affair of the Seneschal of Rennes to him the other day; he immediately made it his own; it was attended with very great difficulties; he had Parère to contend with; he related it to M. de Pomponne that he might thoroughly understand it: in short, we ought to kiss the ground over which he passes. The Seneschal is so surprised to find such an excellent hearted man in the world, and at having gained his cause, that he thinks me the richest woman in France in having such a friend; and he is right. Whenever you have occasion for his service, you may make use of him therefore, without being under any apprehension of wearying him, as you may likewise of the fat Abbé, if you have any bills of exchange to negotiate; it is good, you know, to be acquainted with everyone's talent.

You will be at no loss for news; our good La Troche will furnish you with everything of consequence; but, as you say, all is well, the rest of the year will be all peace and tranquillity. Only think of the great Prince de Condé retiring and acting upon the defensive, with the month of October and the gout before his eyes[1]. M. de Lorraine

[1] This campaign was the last, and passes for one of the most

was unwilling that time should be wasted in the siege of Tréves. "You will certainly perish there, gentlemen," said he: "there are four thousand men in Tréves, besides an exasperated Maréchal of France." And, indeed, the Maréchal performs wonders; he sweeps the trenches every two or three days in the neatest manner imaginable: but, after all, nothing is impregnable; everything must at length yield to superior force.

I took my leave yesterday of M. de La Garde; if he would embrace you, let him, and place it to my account. I have a very great esteem and friendship for him. Let me exhort you, my dear child, to be careful of your health, if you have any love for me. I hear you say the same thing to me, and I give you my word I will, for your sake, be particularly careful of mine. Do not amuse yourself by vain inquietudes; it does not agree with your excellent understanding: preserve your courage, and impart a little to me in your letters: it is a good provision in this life. Talk to me a great deal of yourself: all details are interesting, when there is a certain degree of love to make them so.

Pray write to the Cardinal: you did not judge well with respect to the *cassolette*, and I assure you he was not a little piqued at your haughtiness in refusing this last token of his esteem and friendship. A refusal can never sit well in cases of this kind, and where the thing is in itself of so trifling a value, you will find no one to agree with you; and you should always be diffident of following your own opinion in defiance of every other person's.

Yesterday evening I took leave of the handsome prelate; he desired me to lend him my portrait, that is, yours, to take to Madame de Fontevrault's; I refused him in the style of a Rabutin, and told him I had refused it to MADEMOISELLE: at the same time, I carried it into a little room, where it was placed with affection, and received with a wish to please me. I am sure no one will remove it:

glorious, undertaken by the great Condé. It appears that he was not fully appreciated. Louvois hated and feared him; and the Court set the tone to all France.

they know too well how dear this charming portrait is to me; and if anyone comes here to ask for it, he will be told I have taken it with me: M. de Coulanges will tell you where it is. M. de Pomponne wished to see it the other day; he talked to it, and almost expected it to answer. Your absence has increased the likeness: it cost me a pang to leave it.

We laughed till the tears came into our eyes about your Madame de La Charce, and her daughter the fair Philis of nine and thirty: I think I see her here; you pretend that you have no genius for story-telling, nothing in the world could be related with more humour, nor can anyone write more agreeably than you do; but it is grievous to be in a country where they make such a burlesque of their mourning. I thank you for the trouble you have taken to write this story to me: it is a style you do not like, but which has delighted me exceedingly. M. de Coulanges will tell you so. He read this part of your letter admirably. And now I seem to have nothing more to say than, *Take me to The Rocks*[1], *so M. l'Abbé let us be gone*: *the deed is done, my very dear Comtesse*: *adieu.*

Je vais partir, belle Hermione,
Je vais exécuter ce que l'Abbé m'ordonne,
Malgré le péril qui m'attend [2].

This is merely for the sake of saying something, for our Province is now as calm as the Saône.

A grand service for M. de Turenne is now performing at Nôtre-Dame. Cardinal de Bouillon, and Madame d'Elbeuf, came yesterday to ask me to go there, but I am satisfied with that of Saint Denis, which was superior to any I had ever witnessed. Do you not wonder at the ef-

[1] An allusion to the saying of Philoxenes the poet, who, rather than praise the verses of Dionysius the tyrant, said, *Take me to the quarries.*

[2] A parody on the parting scene in the opera of *Cadmus.*

Yes, fair Hermione! I leave thee now,
I leave thee, lovely mistress of my fate!
Whither the Abbé orders me, I go,
Regardless of the dangers that await. [Translation.]

fects occasioned by the death of this hero, and at the complexion of affairs, now he is no more? Ah! my dear child, I have long been of your opinion: nothing is of so much value as a great and good soul: it appears in everything, as through a heart of crystal: it has no concealment, it makes no dupes: we cannot long take the shadow for the substance: we must be good, if we wish to appear so: the world bears no long injustice: you ought to be of this opinion for your own interest.

LETTER 337

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Orléans, Wednesday, September 11, 1675.

At length, my child, I am ready to embark on our Loire; do you remember the pretty voyage you and I once made there together? I shall often think of it. But however terrible your Rhône may be, I wish I was as near trusting myself to its mercy. M. de La Trousse is to return hither on his parole, but is not to have the government of Philippeville. We cannot guess what fortune has in store for him, perhaps a musket-ball at last; heavens forbid! I saw the Grand-Master and Madame de La Troche the morning I set out: the latter took me to mass, and waited for my carriage at Madame de La Fayette's, where I found the Marquis de Saint Maurice, who has returned from England to assist at the funeral of his Duc: this is mere form.

I will write to you from all the places I can. You say, that hope is so pleasing. Alas! it must be so in a greater degree than you describe it, to enchant more than half the world in the manner it does. I am one of its most ardent votaries. I carry with me great uneasiness respecting my son, and leave with pain the opportunity of hearing news of the army. I sent him word the other day, as I did to you, that I was going to put my head

into a sack, where I should neither see nor hear anything that passes in the world.

I shall proceed in my old character, and attempt still to tell you news; you will guess from what author it comes. It is certain that *Quanto* and her friend are really separated: but the damsel is frequently grieved, even to tears, to see how well her friend does without her. He only regretted his liberty, and the safe retreat from the Lady of the Castle; whatever was the reason, his heart was little interested in anything further. He has met with society that pleases him; he is gay, and delighted to be free from trouble. The fair one trembles and weeps, fearing this may imply a diminution of his flame; and if it were otherwise, she would not be without her sorrows. Thus repose is banished. You may make your reflections on this, as on a certain truth: I believe you understand me.

With regard to England, Mademoiselle de Kéroualle[1] has been disappointed in nothing; she wished to be the mistress of the King, and she is so. He takes up his abode with her almost every night in the face of the whole Court: she has had a son, who has been acknowledged, and presented with two Duchies. She amasses treasure, and makes herself feared and respected as much as she can. But she did not foresee that she would find a young actress[2] in her way, whom the King dotes on: and she has it not in her power to withdraw him from her. He divides his care, his time, and his health, between these two. The actress is as haughty as the Duchess of Portsmouth; she insults her, makes faces at her, attacks her, frequently steals the King from her, and boasts of his preference for her. She is young, indiscreet, confident, meretricious, and pleasant; she sings, dances, and acts her part well. She has a son by the King, and wishes to have him acknowledged: she reasons thus: "This Duchess," says she,

[1] Louise-Renée de Penancoët de Kéroualle, created Duchess of Portsmouth in England in 1672, and Duchess of d'Aubigny in France in 1684 in her own right and that of Charles Lenox, Duke of Richmond, her son.

[2] Nell Gwynne.

"pretends to be a person of quality; she says she is related to the best families in France; whenever any person of distinction dies, she puts herself in mourning[1]. If she be a lady of such quality, why does she demean herself to be a courtesan? she ought to be ashamed of herself. As for me, it is my profession; I do not pretend to anything better. The King maintains me, and I am constant to him at present. He has a son by me: I say he ought to acknowledge him, and I am sure he will, for he loves me as well as he does Portsmouth." This creature gets the upper hand, and discountenances and embarrasses the Duchess extremely. I like these original characters. I could find nothing better to send you from Orléans; but this is at least truth.

I am extremely well, my child; and I find the convenience of being a substance that thinks, and reads: were it not for these privileges, our good Abbé would amuse me very little. You know he is generally employed in admiring the *beautiful eyes of his casket*; but while he is counting them over, and feasting his own eyes with them, Cardinal Commendon[2] is a very agreeable companion to me. The weather and the roads are extremely pleasant: we have such clear bright days, as we used to compare to crystal, in which we are neither sensible of cold nor heat. Our equipage would carry us very well by land; it is for our amusement we go by water.

To prevent your inquietude, I am in perfect health; I am very regular in the management of it, with a view to please you. Be not in pain about Marie: she does everything for me that Hélène could do. I foresee your inquie-

[1] Mademoiselle de Kéroualle went into mourning for the King of Sweden; a little after, the King of Portugal died. Her rival appeared in a mourning coach, and made her this proposal: "Let us agree to divide the world: you shall have the Kings of the north, and I the Kings of the south."

[2] *The Life of Cardinal Commendon* by Fléchier. He was a Venetian. At the end of the sixteenth century, he was sent by the Court of Rome from Germany to Poland, where he was sufficiently skillful to make the Decrees of the Council of Trent received. His Life, which is here alluded to, is a translation from the Latin of Gratiani.

tude. I love you, my dearest, and my tenderness is the most delightful employment of my mind.

I do not boast of a friendship with M. le Premier, but I have seen him frequently at M. de La Rochefoucauld's, at Madame de Lavardin's, at his own house, and twice at mine. He finds me with his friends, and you know what kind of reverberations that causes.

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*LETTER 338

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Monsieur* DE COULANGES.

Orléans, Wednesday, September 11, 1675.

We are arrived without any adventure; I slept last night, as I told you I should, at Thoury. This morning we passed on the highway, two men hanged upon trees: we could not understand this, for wheels seem to be more appropriate to highways; we have been engaged in guessing the meaning of this novelty; they made a gruesome appearance, and I vowed that I would inform you of it. Scarcely had we alighted here, when twenty boat-men surrounded us, each boasting the rank of the persons he had had the honour to row, and the excellence of his boat; the knives of Nogent, and the chapelets of Chartres, were not more famous. We were a long time deciding; one appeared too young, the other too old; one was so anxious to convey us, that we suspected him of being a beggar with a rotten boat; the other was proud of having conveyed M. de Chaulnes: at length predestination seemed to point to a well-made lad, whose mustachios, and mode of proceeding, decided us. Adieu, then, my dear cousin: we are going to embark on the beautiful Loire; it is a little subject to overflow, but its waters are the more tranquil.

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* Letters with an asterisk have not previously been translated.

LETTER 339

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Tours, Saturday, September 14, 1675.

I received your letter, my dear, at Orléans, the moment before I went on to the boat: it was a great treasure, and a great consolation to me in all my voyage. Among the many agreeable things you write to me, there is one I am peculiarly touched with. You tell me I take a great deal of trouble on your account, but that it is with perfect ease to myself, and that this makes it the highest obligation. This is entering so well into my thoughts, that I am overpaid by this single sentiment. I shall one day have it in my power to give you a very pleasing entertainment, by obliging you with the sight of some of your own letters.

I know not what to say to you more of M. de Turenne, nor of Pertuis; I fear the latter will not be comforted in my absence. I left Madame de Vaubrun half mad, Madame de Langeron half dead; but, my dear, I will not answer for anything: I know nothing; my head is in a sack. I hear, however, that Tréves is taken. I doubt Sanzei will hardly be found again; his wife is the more to be pitied. *Quanto gli doveva parere il dubbio buono, se dovea soffrire tanto del certo*[1]. This ought to be decisive.

I suppose M. de La Trousse is permitted to return on his parole, and that he has not lost much of his equipage. I should pity him if he had not recovered *the beautiful eyes of his casket*: this folly struck us both at the same time; I had just written it to you.

I easily comprehend the agreeable things Madame de Vaudémont writes to you: she is very amiable. I honour the friendship you preserve for each other, in spite of all

[1] How delightful doubt must be to her, if certainty is to make her so wretched! [Translation.]

that separates you: I commend you for continuing your correspondence with such fidelity.

I slept last night at Véret[1]; M. d'Effiat knew of my voyage; he came to the river-side with the Abbé to receive me. His house surpasses everything I have seen in point of beauty, comfort, and magnificence: the country is more delightful than any other spot upon the habitable globe; I should never finish, if I attempted to describe it. M. and Madame Dangeau came here to dine with me, and are gone to Valencei. M. d'Effiat accompanied us on our return; we travelled about a league and a half through a road covered with flowers; he has just taken his leave of us with a thousand different expressions of friendship for you.

I have nothing to write upon, but a little paper borrowed from the hostess, which obliges me to conclude. To-morrow we return to our boat, and steer our course to Saumur. I saw at Véret letters from Paris. It is thought the Prince of Orange will retake Liège. I am afraid M. de Luxembourg will endeavour to hinder him, or attempt some siege: this alarms me for my poor Sévigné. It is said, the Prince will not remain in Germany all the winter, and that M. de Schomberg will be sent thither. My dear, it is not for the sake of telling you news, but only of talking to you, that I write all this. I remembered the other day at Blois, a charming place, where we walked with the poor little Comte de Chapelles, who made a parody on this sonnet of *Uranie,*

Je veux finir mes jours dans l'amour de Marie[2].

My dear, how much I am vexed to leave you, and how dearly I love you! I embrace you with a heart that knows no equal. If this offends M. de Grignan, I am sorry for it, and appease him with a kiss.

The History of the Crusades is very fine; but the

[1] This fine seat on the bank of the Cher, belongs at present to the Comte d'Agenois.

[2] "I will end my days in the love of Marie." [Translation.] The first line of the celebrated sonnet of Voiture.

style of Father Maimbourg displeases me much. He has gleaned all the false delicacies which are to be found in the conversation of such as affect politeness. If we excuse his style, it is for the sake of the history.

LETTER 340

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Tuesday, September 17, 1675.

Here is an odd date for you:

Je suis dans un bateau,
Dans le courant de l'eau,
Fort loin de mon château. [1]

I think I might add,

Ah quelle folie! [2]

for the water is so very low, and we are so often aground, that I heartily wish for my carriage again, but that is out of reach for some time. The water becomes dull when one is alone. A Comte des Chapelles, and a Mademoiselle de Sévigné, are wanting to enliven the scene. In short, it is mere folly to take a boat at Orléans, or even at Paris; but it is the fashion, as it is at Chartres to buy *chapelets*. I told you I saw the Abbé d'Effiat at his noble mansion. I wrote to you from Tours, from thence we went to Saumur, where we saw Vineuil, and wept again over M. de Turenne. He seems greatly affected with his loss; you will pity him when I tell you he is in a place where no one ever saw this hero. Vineuil is grown very old, very phthisicky, very drivelling, and very devout; but he is still witty: he sends you a thousand and a thousand compli-

[1] From the bottom of a boat,
On the water afloat,
Not a house in our sight. [Translation.]

[2] This is folly outright. [Translation.]

ments. It is thirty leagues from Saumur to Nantes: we determined to go there in two days, and to get into Nantes as this day: with this view we were upon the water some part of the night; but unfortunately we ran aground about two hundred yards from the place where we were to go ashore to sleep, and could not get out of the boat; so we put back and landed at another place, and, following the barking of a dog, we got to a little hut, about midnight, but the most wretched place you can possibly conceive: there we found two or three old women spinning, and some fresh straw, upon which we all lay down without taking off our clothes. I should have laughed heartily at this scene, had it not been for thinking of our poor Abbé, whom I was vexed to have exposed to such a fatiguing journey. At day-break we reëmbarked, but were again so completely stranded, that it was above an hour before we could get afloat again; however, we were resolved to get to Nantes, though against both wind and tide. We were forced to row all the way. When we got there, I received your letters; and as I find the post must pass through Ingrande, I shall leave this little note by the way. I am very well, and only want somebody to chat with. I shall write to you from Nantes, as you may suppose. I am very impatient to hear from you, and about M. de Luxembourg and his army; for my head has been in a sack these nine days. The *History of the Crusades* is very amusing, particularly to those who have read Tasso, and who see their old friends again in prose and in history; but with respect to the author's style, I am his very humble servant. The *Life of Origen* is divine [1].

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[1] This is the work of Thomas du Fossé, of Port-Royal. It had just been published, with the *Life of Tertullian,* by the same author.

LETTER 341

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Nantes, Friday, September 20, 1675.

I have just received my dear child's letter, wherein she supposes me a wanderer on the borders of the ocean: can anything be more just than these suppositions? I wrote to you constantly on the road, and even from my little boat as long as I was able. I arrived here about nine o'clock at night, at the foot of this great Castle wall, at the very place whence our Cardinal (*de Retz*) made his escape: we heard a small bark rowing towards us, and a voice that cried, "*Who goes there?*" I had my answer ready, and in an instant I saw M. de Lavardin come out of the little door with five or six flambeaux before him, and accompanied by several of the nobles; he came up to me, and held out his hand with all the politeness imaginable. I am persuaded this must have made a very pretty scene from the water, and I know it gave my boatmen no small idea of their passengers' consequence. I ate a very hearty supper, for I had neither eaten nor slept for nearly four and twenty hours. I slept at M. de Harouïs': there is nothing but feasting and merriment going on at the Castle and here. M. de Lavardin never leaves me: he seems delighted with an opportunity of conversing with me: he has given me the whole detail of the history of this Province, and the different conduct of those who have the government of it; it is extraordinary, and has amused me; and in return I acquaint him with everything relative to our Province. He has many great and good qualities; he is sometimes imperious and haughty, and this has hitherto done him service; and on a sudden, he is all mildness and submission to the Governor, which contributes still more to enhance his reputation. He has given the title of *Monseigneur* to La Feuillade and de Duras, and, by way of

familiarity, has thrown in "*My most honoured lord.*" This is some comfort for you, and may serve to show you what style you must make use of, if you write at all to these gentlemen.

I saw our Sisters of Sainte-Marie who still adore you, and remember every syllable you said while you were with them. We are going to Silleraye[1]: M. de Lavardin will take me there, and from thence to *The Rocks,* where I shall be on Tuesday. Alas! my child, what a misery! can you endure my letters now? I thank M. de Grignan for regretting them. The Abbé is well, and I am, if possible, much better. M. de Guitaud has written to inform me of his wife's being safely delivered, which gives me no small pleasure, as I was under some uneasiness about her. I have some suspicion of you; but I dare not suffer myself to dwell upon a thought of that kind, which could not fail to afflict me greatly, were I assured it were the case. M. de Coulanges tells me that poor Madame de Sanzei has at length put on mourning; La Mousse was with her at Autri, but has come back again, though she has more need of him now than ever. I am still under apprehensions for my son. I fancy that M. de Luxembourg has still a great desire to risk a little battle: oh! it is a cruel profession.

I am rejoiced, my dear, to find that the Archbishop (*d'Arles*) is with you; I guess the nature of your conversations, and all your little propositions and resolutions: I would not have you undertake to remove my interest in your affairs; it is, in other words, telling me to die, for as long as I am in existence, I shall be more anxious and occupied with them, than with anything that can happen to myself: calculate upon this, and pity me for being of no greater service to you than I am; for in short, what can I do for you? Salute the Archbishop very respectfully for me; I wish him health for the sake of his family and friends. M. d'Harouïs makes you a million of compliments: we read the newspapers here; I thought the pas-

[1] An estate belonging to M. d'Harouïs.

sage you remarked, very droll. M. de Montgaillard was killed five or six days ago, by a brother of Tonquedec's; it seems they had a quarrel, and Montgaillard fell upon the other in a violent rage, and gave him several blows with the cane he used to such good purpose upon his Lieutenant; Pont-Gand drew his sword, and ran him through the body; he died instantly; this scene took place in a small town in Lower Brittany, where M. de Chaulnes happened to be at the same time. You shall not want for news from Brittany. I pity you, my poor child, in having such letters as mine to read, and I pity myself for having such stuff to write you.

I was under some uneasiness this morning about my son: but I have since seen by all the papers, that M. de Luxembourg intends to remain in Flanders. You have doubtless heard of the infamous capitulation of Tréves [1]. I think it was very fortunate for the Maréchal that he was only delivered prisoner to the enemy. The Confederate army will now join that of the Imperialists; but we are certain that the Prince will not be obliged to fight, unless he chooses it: this is one of the advantages of being a good chess-player. M. de Coulanges is going to Lyons; he writes me word, that he has left your portrait in pledge with a merchant for some money he was obliged to borrow of him. The dear portrait! I am naturally fond of good painting; but I must own that its being so very like you, does not add a little to its value.

You have reason to approve the report that prevails of my being on my way to Provence: ought we not, in justice, to follow the feelings of our own heart, when they are so lively and just as mine? Ah, what folly! for while I say this, I am at Nantes. I shall be sorry when your

[1] Maréchal de Créqui, after having defended Tréves for the space of a month with the utmost valour, was at last made prisoner of war by the perfidy of a Captain of Horse, named Boisjourdan, who found means to stir up the whole garrison against him, and being let out at the gates of the town, privately went over to the besiegers, and drew up articles of capitulation unknown to the Maréchal. This wretch was afterwards taken, as he was endeavouring to escape into the enemy's territories, and had his head severed from his body at Metz.

five months at Grignan are over: Aix and Lambesc are far less pleasing to me than the unrestrained freedom of your Castle. You have paid all your visits: that is well. I have not written to the Princess since the death of her son; how can one write on such subjects? and what is become of de Vardes, and my friend Corbinelli? Félix's[1] son is Bishop of Apt or Gap.

Recollect, my child, that I receive your letters on the ninth day after they are written: I tell you this, *fuor di proposito* (unseasonably), to remove your idea that I am at the Antipodes. Poor Vaubrun is still in an abyss of grief. I am very much of your opinion, that there are certain losses for which we ought not to receive consolation, and which should prevent us from seeing visitors: we ought, as our good Cardinal said, to draw the bolts upon ourselves. The little Cardinal (*de Bouillon*) still thinks of his uncle. I hold in contempt the service of Nôtre-Dame after that of St. Denis. I return to Cavoye, whom I was not at all pleased with in Paris: he was at Court, and in good health: will they dare tell us that he was afraid of weeping? Poor little dear, what a great misfortune! I wish you could have seen Barillon and the good Boucherat.

LETTER 342

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Silleraye, Tuesday, September 24, 1675.

I am now, my dear child, in a place where you were one day with me; but you would not know it again, for there is not one stone left upon another of what were then standing. M. de Harouïs has built a large house here: it is thirty *toises*[2] in front, with two wings, and two pavil-

[1] M. Félix was first surgeon to the King, and his son was afterwards translated to the Bishopric of Châlons-sur-Saône.

[2] One *Toise* is equal to six feet.

Copié d'après un Dessin Original *Gravé par Lorieux*

THE CASTLE AT GRIGNAN, PROVENCE.

ions; he had the plan from a celebrated architect of Nantes, but as he was not on the spot himself three times while it was building, it has been very badly executed. Our Abbé is quite grieved at it; as for M. d'Harouïs, he only laughs at it. He took us there last evening. M. de Lavardin dined with us, and detains me till to-morrow morning. It is impossible for the attentions, confidence, and consideration of M. de Lavardin to me, to be exceeded: I assure you M. de Grignan himself could not show me greater hospitality nor greater kindness. I dare not praise him more to you; but he has very solid virtues, and a disinterestedness which fits him for command. I shall lull you to sleep some day with the affairs of this Province: they are worthy of attention, and you must now suffer me to write them as news. My letters, compared with those you receive from Paris, will have the air of being written by a provincial lady, who relates and confides to you the intrigues of Avignon, or some other town. In short, my dear child, nothing but your affection will make you prize my letters. We have heard news from the Court: it is said that M. Félix is not Bishop of Gap, but of Digne. How happy I think you in having M. de Saint-Paul and him! Would to God they were with us! you would have much less uneasiness. I wish you also a little M. Laurens, who, it is said, will be placed in the first conveyance. I had intended to send my compliments to Molinier, but it is to the Archbishop and the Coadjutor I ought to address myself. They are companions and brothers: I am delighted.

Our poor Lower-Bretons flock together forty or fifty at a time in the fields, and when they see the soldiers, they fall upon their knees, and say, "*meâ culpâ*;" this is the only word of *French* they know; as our French said, that in Germany the only word of *Latin* that was said at mass, was *Kyrie eleïson.* They still hang these poor Lower-Bretons; they ask for nothing but something to drink, and some snuff, and to be dispatched; and *de Caron pas un mot.* Out of the seven days I was at Nantes, I spent three afternoons with our Sisters of Sainte-Marie: they

have sense, they adore you, and are delighted with the little friend[1] I always carry with me; for if it were to be spoiled, as Monsieur Langlade said to M. d'Andilly, what would become of me without it? M. de Lavardin sends you a thousand compliments, and M. d'Harouïs will, I think, write to you, being your enthusiastic admirer: I love him, as you know, and I take pleasure in observing him. I wish you could see this mind so superior to the trifles that occupy others; his mild and benevolent temper; his soul, as great as M. de Turenne's, appears to me worthy of a kingdom, and I wonder at the way in which we estimate the moral virtues. I am certain if M. d'Harouïs were to die, there would be as many masses said for him, as for M. de Turenne. We take our departure to-morrow for *The Rocks*, where I shall find letters from you: I have been in this country two days longer than I wished, which is the reason I have heard but twice from you. I am well: how are you, my child? do you sleep? is your north-east wind tractable? It is delightful weather here.

LETTER 343

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, September 29, 1675.

I wrote to you, my dear child, from every place where it was possible to do it; but as I was not so exact with respect to our dear d'Hacqueville, and the rest of our friends, they have been very uneasy about me, for which I am really extremely obliged to them: they did the Loire the honour to suppose that it had swallowed me up; alas, poor thing! I am sure I should have been the first it had ever served so unhandsomely; I found no other inconvenience from it, but that its waters were too shallow. D'Hacqueville writes me word that he knows not what to say

[1] Miniature portrait of Madame de Grignan.

to you of me, and that he fears his silence respecting me will alarm you. Are you not too good in having appeared so solicitous about me, that we are anxious to spare you every trifling uneasiness? You have so thoroughly convinced me of this, that I have thought of nothing but of writing to you punctually. I set out from Silleraye the day after I wrote to you, which was on Wednesday; M. de Lavardin put me into my carriage, and M. d'Harouïs loaded me with provisions of all kinds. We arrived here on Thursday. The first person I met was Mademoiselle du Plessis, more frightful, more foolish, and more impertinent, than ever. I am really ashamed of the liking she has taken to me, and I swear *by this good sword*, that I will not encourage it by the least complaisance, friendship, good-nature, or mark of approbation: I say the rudest things possible to her, but unfortunately, she takes them all in good part, and thinks I am jesting with her. You may judge whether I tell you truth or not, after the story of the box on the ear, which I thought would have killed Pomenars with laughing. She is constantly at my elbow, but at present, indeed, she is taking the drudgery of the house off my hands; she is cutting out serviettes for me.

I found my woods perfectly beautiful and shady; the trees which were so little when you last saw them, are all grown very large, beautiful, and flourishing; they have been pruned, and now form a delightful shade; they are from forty to fifty feet high: is there not something of maternal tenderness in this detail? Consider, I planted them myself, and saw them, as M. de Montbazon says of his children, when *they were no higher than this*; it is a retreat formed expressly for meditation. I am persuaded you would make the most of it, were you here; I assure you, I am far from neglecting it: if the thoughts are not made black by it, they are at least turned to a dark grey; I think of you at every step, I regret your absence, I long for your company; then your health, your affairs, the distance you are at from me, all this makes terrible havoc in my poor brain: it requires the most perfect sub-

mission to the will of Providence, to endure what I do without despair. As to health, I am as well in that respect as I was ten years ago. I cannot conceive whence I derive this perpetual spring; my constitution every way answers the purposes I require of it: I read, I amuse myself; if I have anything to do, I do it before the Abbé, as if he were in another place: this agreeable unconstraint, together with a little hope, just prevents me from being at the expense of a cord to hang myself with. I found a letter of yours the other day in which you called me, your good mamma; it was written at Sainte-Marie's, when you were ten years old, and you related to me the story of Madame Amelot, who fell head over heels from her parlour to the cellar; your style was good, even then. I found several other letters to Mademoiselle de Sévigné. All these circumstances bring you to my mind, for what else could make me think of you? I received no letters from you by the last post, which makes me somewhat uneasy. Neither have I heard anything more from the Coadjutor, La Garde, Mirepoix, du Bellièvre, than if they were in another world; I intend to rouse them a little.

Do you not admire the King's good fortune? They inform me, that *His Highness my father*[1] is dead; he was a good enemy: they say likewise, that the Imperialists have recrossed the Rhine, to defend the Emperor from the Turk, who presses him on the side of Hungary: all these are what we may call lucky stars for His Majesty, but make us humble in Brittany, for fear of experiencing heavier punishments. I am going to pay a visit to the good Princesse de Tarente; she has already sent me her compliments twice, and always inquires very kindly after you—if she pays her Court to me in this way, she will most certainly succeed. Your observation on Saint-Thou is excellent, that at least he cannot be accused of not having told his dream till after his misfortune. I pity you

[1] Charles IV., Duc de Lorraine, died the 17th of September: Madame de Lillebonne his daughter, whenever she spoke of him, used to style him, *His Highness, my father.*

for not having your own letters to read; but though they constitute my dearest and only pleasure, though I know their value, I am sorry to receive so many of them.

Adieu, my beloved child: I frequently hear from your brother; he is very much concerned at not being able to get rid of this wretched *guidonage*; but he should consider that there are a number of persons present and pressing, who are to be provided for first, and who indeed have merited it by their services; these will always be preferred to one who is absent, and considered as already provided for; and who has besides had no opportunity of showing himself by anything, except his impatience in being so long a subaltern; and that they do not care a centime about. Well! this is precisely what we used to say, that after a long and wearisome voyage, we found ourselves nine hundred leagues from a harbour, and so on, you know.

LETTER 344

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, October 2, 1675.

My dear child, I received your letter two days ago: this was the tenth day; I might have received it sooner. If the post had arrived at Paris on Tuesday, I should have received it on Friday, instead of Monday. These calculations remind me of the good Chésières; but I hope you will bear with them, and consider whence they proceed, and to what they tend. Your letter affected me sensibly: I fancy you are not unconcerned at this further removal; you speak of it with tenderness: for my part, I felt, and still feel, it painfully. I thought the distance we were at before was sufficient; a hundred leagues added to it increases my sorrows; I cannot dwell on this thought without a fresh occasion for your lectures. What you say in

two words of the little profit you receive from them yourself, is a tenderness that pleases me extremely. You say you would have me write to you of my woods; the barrenness of the subject cannot make my letters displeasing to you. Well then, my child, I will tell you that I pay homage in them to my favourite planet, the moon; Plessis is going away; the good Abbé fears the dew; I, who never feel it, remain there with *Beaulieu* and my servants till eight o'clock: the walks possess such beauty, tranquillity, repose, and silence, that I cannot enjoy them too much. Whether I think of you with affection or sensibility, I leave you to guess, for I am not competent to describe what I feel. I am here alone, and very much at my ease; but I am apprehensive of company, that is, of constraint.

I have been to visit the good Princesse (Madame de Tarente); she received me with transport. Her opinion of you, shows she has not altogether the taste of a German: she is pleased with your person, and with what she has seen of your mind. She does not want sense in her way. She loves her daughter [1]; she is wholly taken up with the thoughts of her; she tells me what she suffers from her absence, as the only person who can enter into her feelings. I can give you a very good account of the Court of Denmark; I know nothing of that of France, but I shall not fail to send you the news of Copenhagen. I must acquaint you, that the Princesse de La Trémouille is a favourite of the Queen, who is her first cousin. There is a Prince, the King's brother, very agreeable and very gallant, whom we have seen in France, and who is passionately in love with the Princesse; and the Princesse may, perhaps, have some disposition not to hate him: but there is a favourite who is very powerful, called Comte Kinghstoghmkllfel, you understand [2]: this Comte is likewise in love with the

[1] Charlotte-Emilie-Henriette de La Trémouille, married May 29, 1680, to Antoine d'Altembourg, Comte d'Oldembourg.

[2] There is no doubt that Madame de Sévigné amused herself by making this name worse than it really was. The fact is this. The favourite alluded to is *Schuhmaker* (in French *Cordonnier*), Comte de

Princesse, but she hates him; not but that he is brave, well made, has wit, and politeness, but he is not a gentleman by descent, and that thought is enough to make a lady faint. The King is his confidant, and is desirous to conclude this marriage: the Queen is in the interest of her cousin, and favours the pretensions of the Prince: but the King opposes him, and the favourite makes him feel the weight of his jealousy and of his power. The Princesse weeps, and writes to her mother letters of forty pages. She has demanded her dismission from the Court, but neither the King nor the Queen will consent to it, though for different reasons. The Prince is removed from the Court on several pretexts, but he always finds some plausible occasion to return. At present they are engaged in a war with the Swedes; and the rivals are piquing themselves on the performance of romantic actions to please the Princesse. The favourite said to her, as he took his leave, "I see, Madame, in what manner you treat me, but I am sure it is not in your power to refuse me your esteem." This is the first volume of the history; you shall not fail to have the sequel of it; I am resolved, that no person in France shall be better acquainted than you with the intrigues of Denmark. When I have no more to say of this Court, I shall enter-

Griffenfeld, High Chancellor of Denmark, and very celebrated in the history of that kingdom. The greatest talents and most memorable services had raised him from the situation of a secretary, to this exalted dignity, and to the unlimited favour of Christian V. He was, indeed, very much in love with Madame de La Trémouille, and on the point of deserting a Princess of the blood, to whom he was betrothed. But the romance, of which Madame de Sévigné gives us only the first volume, ended speedily, and tragically. In the year 1676, Griffenfeld was arrested, tried, sentenced to lose his head, and through favour, thrown into a prison, from which he was liberated twenty-three years afterwards, only to die in a few months. Extortion, venality, and high treason, were his crimes. He owed his misfortune partly to his connections with France. Louis XIV. wishing to employ the Swedes against the Dutch, his Ambassador Terlon stirred everything to prevent a war between Denmark and Sweden. Griffenfeld privately, and against the King's wish, seconded him, either from the belief that he could govern his master more easily in peace than in war, or from being gained over to Louis by the liberality of his presents. It appears clear, however, that he abused his power over his master, whose pride the jealous nobles roused, and irritated.

tain you with Pilois[1]; there is no medium between these important subjects. I must let you know, however, that these are very great secrets: above all, I beg you not to pronounce the name of the Comte Kinghstoghmkllfel.

I am very glad you sleep at Grignan, and that you are not devoured. Think not that you are the only one who is in pain respecting the health of another. I think incessantly of yours. Your flowers and walks delight me. I hope I shall have some nosegays from the large garden I am so well acquainted with: I had intended to ask you for a few of your fine grapes; what a shame to offer me none! but it is because they are not yet ripe.

In the name of God, my dear child, tell me what you think of my refusal of your portrait to *Quanto's* sister[2]? You suppose, I fear, that I have been too rude: answer me this. I followed my first impulse, and am apprehensive I have displeased the Coadjutor. I hear he will soon be with you; when I reflect on the society he will meet with in the country, it is matter of wonder to me how he can regret these every-day women. La Trousse is at Paris, as you know; they talk of giving him the position of Froulai; this will be a step for our poor guidon.

This is a terrible year for Maréchal de Créqui: I think with you, that he is no where in safety or repose, but amongst the enemy. He has a little dissipated the legions that were intrusted to him; but they obeyed him too well on the day of battle.

I am informed from all hands, that M. de Mirepoix is very much dissatisfied as to the constraint of keeping his word, and that we shall not get the ratification from him but by dint of sword.

I forgot to tell you, that the good Tarente returned my visit two days after I had been to see her. It was great news in the country; she was delighted with your miniature: our Denmark girls furnish us with conversation. Write some little civility about the Princesse, which I shall

[1] Her gardener at *The Rocks*.

[2] Madame de Fontevrault.

be delighted to show her: she is to be my physician when I am ill: she is clever, and has promised me a wonderful essence, which has cured her of her horrible vapours. Three drops are to be taken in any liquid, and you are cured as if by magic. I am in perfect health at present, but there is no harm in having a remedy at hand. I find you have lost your good method of thanking me, which was rejoicing with me at the opportunities that offered for serving you: that was delightful. Pray give my compliments to the Archbishop, and embrace M. de Grignan for me. I am wholly yours, my dear child: this, you will say, is something new.

LETTER 345

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, October 6, 1675.

Indeed, my dear child, you relate a most lamentable story about your poor lost letters; was it *Baro* who was guilty of this folly? You were all gay, and in high spirits, thinking you had entertained your friends completely; but I pity the Archbishop the most, as I know he never sets pen to paper, but on affairs of importance, and then, to find that he has taken all this pains only to have his letter lost in a bog, or tumbled down a precipice, is really provoking. As for M. de Grignan, he is discouraged from letter-writing for the rest of his life. What an accident this, to befall an indolent man! you will see that he will never write again, for fear of losing his labour. If you acquaint the Coadjutor with this misfortune, he will not fail to make the most of it. I can easily comprehend your vexation, and I also enter fully into what you endure at leaving Grignan to be subjected to the restraint of a town: liberty is an inestimable blessing; you feel it more than anyone, and I pity you more than I can express. You

will neither have Vardes nor Corbinelli with you, who would have been a great addition to your society.

You ought to have told me the names of the four ladies who came to assassinate you: for my part, I have always time to guard myself against disagreeable company; when I find they are coming on one side, I walk out of the way on the other; this is a trick that I played the wife of the Seneschal of Vitré, no longer ago than yesterday, and then I scolded my servant, for not acquainting me of her being there: if you ask me how I can excuse my conduct, I reply, it is the park puts such tricks into my head. Do you remember one day that we avoided the Fouesnels in that manner? I walk a great deal, these groves are extremely beautiful: I work too as you do, but, thank heaven, I have not a little impertinent Montgobert with me, to put me to my shifts. I cannot imagine how you can endure this humiliation: I do not soil my silk with my wool, I am very well pleased to go my own way; it seems to me as if I were only ten years old, and that a little sampler has been given me to play with: your chairs must be very ugly, that you prefer your bed to them. I am extremely delighted with what Montgobert writes to me; there is a poignancy in her style, and a manner that is very pleasing: it is a pleasure to have so agreeable a companion in a house: I had such a one once in my life, to my no small joy. M. d'Angers wrote me word the other day that she is an angel.

I thought Maréchal d'Albret's answer very droll; and that it contained more wit than usual. It appeared to me excellent; the *affectionate servant* is hard of digestion: the *Monseigneur* is well established. You were highly amused then, my child, with my narrative from Orléans: I laughed at it myself; it was all I had left in my budget, that I thought worth sending you. You are very good to take pleasure in my diffuse and dry descriptions of my woods and my house; you certainly do it purely out of love to me. But I think I made pretty well up for it, by my news from Denmark. The city of Rennes is threatened

with having the Parliament removed to Dinan; this would completely ruin the Province. The punishment that is to be inflicted on that city will make no small noise.

My son writes me word, that in all probability he shall soon be with me here. Have you not got La Garde with you yet? and pray, where is our Coadjutor? You found his harangue exactly what I described; and that part, *the event of war is uncertain*, was the happiest and most agreeable turn in the world; never was any thing so much applauded. I hear M. de Villars is going Ambassador to Savoie; I have likewise received letters from Nantes: if the Marquis de Lavardin, and M. d'Harouïs, were concerned in the *Gazette* of that place, you would certainly have found an article in it about my arrival and departure. I return with interest, my dear child, your concern for Brittany; everything, for twenty leagues round you, is of consequence to me. An *Augustin* came here the other day, a kind of wandering friar, who had been all over Provence, and who mentioned M. de Grignan and M. d'Arles to me several times: I thought him a clever man; but I am certain, had I been at Aix, I should not even have looked at him.

Apropos, did I mention to you an excellent telescope that amused us exceedingly in the boat? It is really a master-piece of its kind; it is a still better one than that which the Abbé left with you at Grignan. This glass brings objects quite home that are at three leagues distance; alas! that it would bring those which are at two hundred! You may easily guess the use we made of it on the banks of the Loire, but I have found a new method of using it, which is this: you know that one end brings objects nearer to you, and the other throws them to a great distance; now this end I turn towards Mademoiselle du Plessis, and in a moment I see her three leagues from me. I tried this experiment the other day on her, and the rest of my neighbours; this was amusing, but nobody knew what I meant by it; if there had been anyone to whom I could have given the hint, the pleasure would

have been greater. When tired with disagreeable company, it is only to send for the glass, and look through it at the end that distances the objects. Ask Montgobert, if she would not have laughed heartily. This is a pretty subject to talk nonsense upon. If you have Corbinelli with you, let me recommend the use of the glass to you. Adieu, my dear; we are not mountains, as you say, so I hope to embrace you a little nearer than two hundred leagues: but you are going still farther off; I have a great mind to set out for Brest. It is very hard, in my opinion, that the Grand-Duchess should not have the good Rarai as her Lady of Honour; the *Guisardes* have appointed la Sainte-Même to the office. I hear that La Trousse's good fortune is doubled, and that he will have de Froulai's position [1].

LETTER 346

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, October 9, 1675.

I received on Monday morning your letter of Sunday night: this is excellent dispatch, but alas, my dear child, it is all at an end; you are going to remove further off, and I must no longer expect such regularity. I greatly sympathize with you in the regret with which you leave Grignan; the life you lead there, is much better suited to your taste, than the continual parade you are obliged to keep up in great towns, and an eternal round of ceremony, that is insupportable. I have written to d'Hacqueville, to desire him not to complain to me of the world of business he has upon his hands, for I know it is what he is fond of: he writes to you three times a week; now you would be very well contented to hear from him but once in that time, and the fat Abbé would excuse him another;

[1] M. de Cavoye obtained the position of Grand-Maréchale-des-Logis, vacant by the death of M. de Froulai, who was killed at Cousarbrick.

so you see how easy he might make it himself. I have proposed the same thing to him on my part, and write to him but once in eight or ten days, by way of setting him the example, but it is to no purpose: he does not understand such an act of indulgence, and will write, as the judge would judge, right or wrong. I am really very sorry for the poor man, for I am sure all this fatigue must at last kill him: were you to see his tables on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, you would think you were at the General Post-Office. For my part, I do not kill myself with writing; I read, I work, I walk, and frequently do nothing; *bella cosa far niente*[1], says the motto on one of my trees; the other answers, *amor odit inertes*[2]; one does not know which to believe, but this I know, that I do not like to confuse my brains with too much writing. I love to write to you indeed, because I can talk to you, gossip with you, and because I could not do without it; but I write to others, only because I must.

I had a letter yesterday from Coligny, in which he asks my consent to marry my niece de Bussy. Ah! I give it him with all my heart: he is called Langheac, it is a family that our Cardinal has praised to the skies. *Apropos*, he is employed in making medicines; he certainly must stand in great need of them, when he can bring himself to the trouble of making them. Pray do not neglect writing to him; you owe him at least that mark of respect and gratitude: you need be under no fear of breaking in upon his meditation; he is not yet in the third heaven. I have heard in secret, a circumstance that gives me no small uneasiness, which is, that Cardinal d'Estrées does all he possibly can, both by himself and his friends, to make the Pope change his resolution, with respect to our Cardinal's hat, and to give it to M. de Marseilles: I assure you, a dagger would not pierce me more than a thing of that kind. And then our Cardinal is continually teasing the Pope, to consider the reasons he has offered in his letter, for di-

[1] How delightful is indolence! [Translation.]

[2] Love hates the slothful. [Translation.]

vesting himself of his dignity: now if they should take advantage of this unlucky circumstance, to make His Holiness change his opinion, would it not be enough to throw us all into despair? I tell you this in confidence: I had it from d'Hacqueville, who may perhaps have told you of it likewise; if so, you will use your own discretion. In the meantime, I assure you, I hate d'Estrées most heartily.

M. de Chaulnes is bringing four thousand men into Rennes to punish the inhabitants; nothing can exceed the confusion of that city, and the unspeakable hatred that the whole Province bears to the Governor. We cannot tell where our States will be held now. I have desired M. de Luxembourg and La Trousse to send me back my son, if they are not going to do anything more this year: I want him much to be here for a short time, that he may see how completely we deceive ourselves, in thinking we have wealth when we have only estates. The poor exiles [1] on the coasts of the Loire know nothing of the crimes laid to their charge, and are very uneasy under the uncertainty. Vassé was at a place about six leagues from Veret, so that I could not see him.

I am grieved at my little girl's cold; I feel more than common affection for her, and place to my own account all your kindness to her: I return the love she displayed for me the moment her reason dawned, by giving her a place in my heart. I am still at my *Crusades*: you cannot fail of being delighted with Judas Maccabeus; he was a great hero; what a shame it will be if you do not finish this book! What would you have? the history, and the style, everything is divine. Adieu, most lovely, and most beloved! Count the hearts over which you reign, and do not forget mine in the list. You will now have the Coadjutor with you, and you will both be happy. They

[1] Messieurs d'Olonne, de Vassé, and de Vineuil, were sent into banishment. After they were recalled, the King one day asked M. de Vineuil how he passed his time at Saumur, the place of his exile. M. de Vineuil answered His Majesty, that he went every day to the town-hall to talk of the news; and that one day a dispute arose, about who was the eldest, His Majesty or Monsieur his brother.

play extravagantly high at Versailles: the *hoca*[1] is forbidden in Paris under pain of death, and yet it is played at Court: five or six thousand pistoles of a morning is nothing to lose. This is no better than picking of pockets. I beseech you to banish this game from amongst you.

I am tired with perpetually hearing that the Imperialists have recrossed the Rhine: no, they have not recrossed it yet; I wish with all my heart they would do one thing or the other. I have acquainted M. de Lavardin with the affair of M. d'Ambres; he was frequently thinking of it. So our Grandees[2] are a little mortified; they may easily judge that the person who gave the decision is interested in the support of dignities of his own creating. Well, you must follow the times; this does not happen to be the most favourable one for you.

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*LETTER 347

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to the Comte* DE BUSSY.

The Rocks, October 9, 1675.

The marriage of Mademoiselle de Bussy, then, is quite certain. Be assured I am delighted at it. I have received a very handsome compliment from M. de Coligny. I see plainly, that you have not failed to inform him that I am your elder, and that my approbation can, at least, do him no harm.

This word harm reminds me of a little anecdote which made me laugh heartily the other day, and which I cannot forbear relating to you. A lad was brought to justice charged with having got a girl with child, and defended himself by saying, "Please your worship, I do not think I have done any harm there, but I am not the father of

[1] A dangerous game at cards.

[2] This relates to the title of *Monseigneur*, which the old nobility refused to give to the Maréchals of France, till the King decided the controversy in favour of the latter.

the child." Pardon me, my dear cousin, I thought there was humour and simplicity in his answer. If a little story of this kind should fall in your way, do not keep it to yourself.

But to return to M. de Coligny. It is certain my approbation can do him no harm. His letter is not that of a fool, and any man who can pay a compliment in this style, must possess both judgment and understanding. I sincerely wish it for the sake of my niece, for whom I have a great regard. At all events, the lessons you give him, when to be grave, and when to be gay, are very good in domestic life. I follow the rules you prescribe to prolong existence. I am never in bed more than seven hours, and I eat sparingly: I add to your precepts walking a great deal, but the worst is, that I cannot prevent sombre thoughts from intruding into my long gloomy avenues. Sadness is poison to us, and the source of the vapours. You are right in thinking this disorder is imaginary: you have admirably defined it; it is sorrow that gives birth to, and fear that nourishes, it. To be with you, would be my best remedy: sorrow would be unknown to me then, and you would teach me to lose the fear of death[1]. I have been here nearly a fortnight; I came by way of the Loire, and found the row delightful. I called upon the Abbé d'Effiat as I passed, who has a charming house, and saw Vineuil also at Saumur. The latter is become religious: this is a very natural feeling in misfortune and old age. I find them less patient than you, because they have less health, less strength of mind, and less philosophy.

I spent a few days at Nantes, where M. de Lavardin and M. de Harouïs treated me like a Queen. At length I reached this desert, where I found walks that were formed under my direction, the trees of which afford me a shade that reminds me I am no longer young. The good Abbé has never quitted me. We employ ourselves in set-

[1] H. S. Nichols, Publisher, New York, has issued in his *Collection of Precious Tomes*, a translation from the Latin of Lucretius's "The Folly of the Fear of Death."

tling our affairs, and I take advantage of his kindness in assisting me. Nothing can be more exact and regular than our accounts. One little circumstance only is wanting to complete our satisfaction, which is, to receive money. But no such thing is to be seen here; in fact, cash is dreadfully scarce. Are you as badly off in Burgundy?

I do not think I shall spend the winter here: but if I return to Paris, it will be on my daughter's affairs; for it must be owned I have a great affection for her. I say nothing of my son: I love him however very much, and his interests occupy me almost as much as my daughter's do. Adieu, Comte. Give me a little information respecting the wedding. Langheac is a high-sounding name for grandeur and antiquity. I have heard it praised to the skies by Cardinal de Retz. He is in retirement. What is your opinion of his retreat? The world, through spite at not being able to vilify so noble an intention, says he will soon be tired of it. Well, so much the better. Wait till he does leave it, and, in the meantime, be silent. In whatever light this action is viewed, it is glorious; and if everyone knew as I do, that its motive was purely a religious desire to work out his salvation, together with a horror for his past life, it would not fail to be universally applauded.

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*LETTER 348

From the Comte DE BUSSY *to Madame* DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Chaseu, October 19, 1675.[1]

I received your letter yesterday, my dear Madame, and it gave me the same pleasure that your letters always do. Your niece is at length on the brink of execution; she will find what she wanted. *Apropos*: this brings the poor Chevalier de Rohan[2] to my remembrance, who meet-

[1] This Letter has been placed out of the order of its date, because it is an answer to the preceding one.

[2] The same who was beheaded for high treason.

ing Madame d' *** [1] late one evening, alone in a gallery at Fontainebleau, asked her what she was looking for. "Nothing;" said she. "Faith, Madame," replied he, "I should be sorry to have lost what you are looking for." This is my little story. You allowed me to tell you one, and I have taken advantage of your permission. Yours amused me highly, and I was pleased with myself that it did; for it is necessary to have some degree of wit, to enter into the point of it.

It is strange that you should know so well the source of your disorder, and that you should not cure it. Think often, my dear Madame, of the necessity of dying, and you will have less fear of death. It is by familiarising myself to the thought, that I have diminished the dread of it. In those who reject, and seldom dwell upon, this idea, it creates sadness; in me, it acts differently; it makes me follow the precept of Solomon, "To do good, and to rejoice," as a means to prolong life. Thus it is by the love of life, that I lose the fear of death [2]. It is certain, that if I were to see you frequently, I should make you hear reason upon the subject, but, in the meantime, I should like to treat it often with you by letter. Do not fancy that it is your interest only that induces me to undertake your cure, it is my own also; and I, who love mirth, believe I should die, if you were to die, from having no one with whom I could laugh in the true spirit of laughing.

LETTER 349

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, October 13, 1675.

You say very justly, my dear, that the dates contribute little to make the letters of those we love agreeable. Why should our attention be confined to public affairs?

[1] Madame d'Heudicourt.

[2] See note on page 46 of this volume.

Your health, your family, your most trifling actions, your sentiments, it is these that interest me; and I am so well persuaded that you are of my way of thinking, that I make no scruple of talking to you of *The Rocks,* of Mademoiselle du Plessis, of my walks, of my woods, of the affairs of our Abbé, and of Copenhagen, when occasion offers. You may therefore firmly believe, that everything that comes from you is of consequence to me, and that I am pleased to know everything, even to your tapestry; and if you want a fresh supply of needles to work with, I can supply you with some admirable ones. I was employed yesterday on a piece of work as tedious as the company I had: I never work but when I have company; when I am alone, I walk, I read, or I write. La Plessis incommodes me no more than Marie; I am so happy as to have no inclination to listen to anything she says, and find as little interruption from her presence, as you do from some whom you have the same kind of regard for. In other respects, she has the best sentiments in the world; I admire how all her good qualities are spoiled by her impertinent and ridiculous manners. It is quite laughable to hear what she says of my patience in bearing with her; how she explains it; and the obligations she fancies it lays her under to attach herself to me; and how I serve her for an excuse for not visiting her friends at Vitré. It would make you smile, to observe her little arts to satisfy her vanity (for vanity is the growth of every soil) ; and her affected fears that I am growing jealous of a nun of Vitré, for whom she has a partiality. All this would make an excellent farce.

I must tell you the news of this Province. M. de Chaulnes is at Rennes with a great number of troops. He has declared, that if the inhabitants offer to leave it, or to raise the least disturbance, he will take away the Parliament from that city for ten years. The fear of this makes them bear with everything: I have not yet heard how these warlike personages behave to the poor citizens. We expect Madame de Chaulnes, who is coming to see the Prin-

cess at Vitré: we are in safety under her protection; but I can assure you, that if I only were here, M. de Chaulnes would think it a pleasure to show his respect for me; this is the only circumstance in which I could answer for him. I beg you to be under no uneasiness; I am in safety here, as in a Province which you say belongs to me.

I shall not thank d'Hacqueville for writing to you three times a week, it would be laughing at him; the praises he merits upon that subject are far from my thoughts. He writes to me twice a week; I shall abridge one of these by my own example, out of pure friendship for him, wishing to have very little part in the murder we are all committing on him: he will die, and then we shall be in despair: it would be an irreparable loss, and all the other d'Hacquevilles in the world would not make amends for it; and he has given me great pleasure, by removing the resentment I felt for Cardinal d'Estrées. He informs me that our Cardinal has been refused in a full consistory on his own letter; and that, after this last ceremony, there is nothing more to fear: so that he is now, for the third time, a Cardinal against his will; at least for these two last times; for the first time, I believe, he was not much displeased. Write and rally him upon this happy disappointment: d'Hacqueville is transported, and I love him for it. I often receive notes from our dear Cardinal, and write to him in return: I keep this little correspondence very secret and mysterious; it is the more dear to me.

You are not much afraid of Ruyter[1]. Ruyter is however, the god of battles. Guitaud is unable to resist him: but, in reality, the King's star resists him. There never was so fixed a star: it dispersed the great fleet last year; killed M. de Lorraine; repulsed Montécuculli; and will make peace, through the marriage of Prince Charles. I mentioned this last circumstance the other day to Madame de Tarente; she told me that he was already married to the Empress Dowager; and that this marriage, though it has not been declared, would prevent the other. You

[1] Admiral of the Dutch fleet.

will see that she will die, if her life occasions any inconvenience. You reason so well upon affairs of State, that it is easy to see you are become a politician in your government. I have written to the beautiful Princess de Vaudemont; she is unhappy, and I am grieved for her, for she is very amiable. I dared not write to Madame de Lillebonne, but you have inspired me with courage. I fear little Coulanges is not with you; his wife has written to me sadly out of spirits; she is at Lyons, where she thinks she shall stay the winter: it is quite high treason in her opinion not to be in Paris: she tells me you have been very sociable together. La Trousse is in Paris, and at Court, overwhelmed with caresses and praises: his way of receiving them is calculated to augment them. It is said that he will have Froulai's position; if it should be so, there will be changes in that company, and I have desired our friend d'Hacqueville to pay a little attention to it, for the sake of our poor guidon, who languishes in his little post. I have sent to him to come hither: I want to marry him to a little damsel, who is a Jewess by birth; but, in my opinion, money is always of a good family. This is a castle in the air; I depend on nothing, after having failed of Mademoiselle d'Eaubonne. Madame de Villars writes to me of fresh wonders performed by the Chevalier de Grignan; I believe they are only the accounts of his former actions renewed: but he has really the best reputation that could be desired..

I must tell you a handsome proceeding of the Attorney-General[1]. He had an estate, of the house of Bellièvre, which was legally made over to him, as a gift: but he returned it to the creditors. He said he could not accept such a present, when he considered that the creditors, who were honest men, would be injured by it. This is very heroical.

I dare not think of seeing you; when this hope sinks too deeply into my heart, and is so unlikely to be gratified, it does me too much harm. I remember still what I suf-

[1] Achille de Harlai, afterwards first President.

fered during the illness of my poor aunt; and how soon the sight of you made me forget that grief: I have not yet a prospect of receiving so much joy. You assure me that you are extremely well; I pray God that your health may continue: I have this subject very much at heart. As for me, I am in perfect health: you would much approve my sobriety, the exercise I take, and my confining myself, like a Carmelite, to seven hours sleep. This austere life pleases me; it resembles the barrenness of the country. I do not grow fat; and the air is so thick and so soft, that my complexion, which many have so long pretended to admire, is not yet changed. I wish you could pass an evening here; you would find it preferable to all the pommades you can use. I have ten workmen, who amuse me extremely. Rahuel and Pilois are each in their proper places. You ought to be convinced of my regard by the trifles with which I fill my letters. Since I complained in verse, of the rain, the weather has been delightful, and I therefore praise it in prose.

Our Province is so much taken up with punishments, that there is no thought of visits; and, without pretending to haughtiness, I am very much pleased at it. Do you remember when we thought there was nothing so good in the country as disagreeable company, for the pleasure of seeing them depart? It is a pleasure I shall not have this year.

LETTER 350

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, October 16, 1675.

No, my dear, I do not entertain too high an opinion of M. de Lavardin: I think him to be what he really is; I am neither charmed with his pleasantries, nor his manners; I see him in the same light I have always done; but I am so just as to give true merit its due, though it be mixed with some disagreeable qualities. It is to his good

qualities that I am attached: and I think myself fortunate, in having expressed to you the same opinion of him in Paris; otherwise you might have suspected that I was influenced by the reception he gave me. In a word, I shall always wish those I love to have more charms; but I shall be satisfied, if they have as many virtues. He has greater generosity and integrity than I have ever met with in a courtier; you would approve his manner of proceeding very much upon certain occasions, though you speak of him as you do. This I say, my dear, in my own justification, and you may impart it to the fat Abbé, if ever by chance he has a pain in the calf of his leg[1] upon this subject. I am glad you have remarked, as well as I, the regularity of our letters, and the admirable diligence of those obliging persons who take charge of them, running with all their strength day and night that we may receive them the sooner: I tell you we are ungrateful to the post-boys, and even to M. de Louvois[2] who establishes them everywhere with so much care and trouble. But, ah! my dear child, we are still further asunder, and all our admiration will cease: when I consider that, in your last letter, you only answer the one I wrote to you from Silleraye, and that I shall have been three weeks to-morrow at *The Rocks,* I find we were sufficiently distant before, without this new addition.

M. d'Hacqueville tells me, that to write once a week is sufficient for business, but not enough to satisfy his friendship; and that he would choose rather to add a letter than to retrench one. You may easily judge, that since the regulation I prescribed did not please him, I laid no restraint on his civilities, and left him the liberty of his writing-desk. Consider, that he writes with the same fury to all who are out of Paris, and visits every day all who remain there: this indefatigableness is in the true spirit of the d'Hacquevilles. You may apply yourself to them,

[1] A familiar expression of the Abbé de Pontcarré when he was weary of any particular subject of conversation.

[2] Superintendent-General of the Post-Office.

my dear, with perfect confidence; their hearts are capable of conquering everything. I have no longer any thought of sparing him; I resolve to employ him without remorse. If I should make a scruple of fatiguing him to death, he will die in the service of some other, who will have less consideration for him. He loves only those by whom he is thus oppressed: let us then oppress him without mercy.

I wish you could see how beautiful these woods are at present. Madame de Tarente was here yesterday the whole day; the weather was perfectly fine; she talked much of you; she admires you more than my little friend [1]. Her daughter is ill; she was very melancholy on account of it. I led her to her coach at the end of the great avenue: she pressed me to retire, and told me I treated her with so much ceremony, that she believed I took her for a German: I replied, "Yes, Madame, I certainly take you for a German [2], I should sooner have obeyed your daughter-in-law [3]." She understood me like a French woman. Her birth, me-thinks, entitles her to respect from those who understand the world. She has a romantic style in every thing she relates, and I wonder that even those who love romances should be displeased with it: she expects Madame de Chaulnes. M. de Chaulnes is at Rennes with Forbin, Vins, and four thousand men: it is thought there will be some hanging. M. de Chaulnes was received like a King, but as it is fear which has made them alter their tone, he does not forget the insults he received, of which the least and most familiar was *fat pig,* without calculating the stones thrown at his windows and into his garden, and the threats, which Providence alone seems to have prevented from being put into execution; it is these that are to be punished.

D'Hacqueville, with his own hand (for it is not in his letter of news, which may have been copied), acquaints

[1] Madame de Grignan's miniature portrait.

[2] Madame de Tarente was the daughter of William V., landgrave of Hesse-Cassel.

[3] Madeleine de Créqui, Duchess de La Trémouille.

me, that M. de Chaulnes arrived with his troops at Rennes on Saturday, October twelfth. I thanked him for his care, and informed him, that M. de Pomponne was sitting for his portrait to Mignard. But this is only to be mentioned amongst ourselves; for you know his temper is as delicate as his complexion. Your brother's letters on the subject of his ensigncy are full of the lamentations of Jeremiah; he says with justice, what we said when he purchased it, that he is still nine hundred leagues distant from the *Cap*; but some people put it into his head, that marrying you, would establish him; and this reason, which ought indeed to have produced a contrary effect with him, has made him so impatient, that he is now in despair: some hearts are strangely compounded. In short, my child, we may be assured that a subaltern's position is a miserable thing.

You know our Cardinal continues a Cardinal to all intents and purposes. We ought all to be delighted at this termination of the affair: degradation is not desirable. In the name of God, do not neglect to write to him: he likes my letters; judge whether he will not like yours. You did not tell me that the first President[1] of Provence had beaten his wife. His manner of doing it delights me: it is gallant and new. "We all know our wives must be beaten sometimes," said a country fellow: but the flat of the sword is charming. I would lay any wager, that little d'Oppède is not dead: I know some who ought to be so.

It must be owned, that the good fortune of the French everywhere surpasses credibility. Our enemies do everything for us, without giving us the least trouble; they retire even when they see it is in their power to embarrass us. You will see what Ruyter will do in the Mediterranean: the Prince of Orange is going to sleep, and I expect your brother. I will answer to you for this Province, and even for peace: it seems to me to be so necessary, that it will make itself, in spite of those who oppose it. I shall follow your advice, my dear child, and live in the

[1] M. Marin.

hope of seeing you again: I cannot begin too soon, to make up for the tears I have shed since our separation, as well as for the fear of not seeing you again.

I embrace M. de Grignan, for I conclude he is returned from the pursuit: tell me all your news, for you see I load you with mine. Saint-Géran has undertaken to write to me seriously on the embassy of Madame de Villars, who, as she says, is going to Turin. I believe it is because there is only one female Regent there: I answered her in the same style, but not without some difficulty. Have you not been thanked for your Queen of Hungary water? It is divine; for my part, I thank you still; I almost get tipsy with it everyday: I carry it in my pocket; it is like snuff, when we are accustomed to it, we cannot do without it: it is an excellent remedy against lowness of spirits; I take it in the evening more to exhilarate me than to guard against the dew, from which my woods defend me. You are too good in fearing the wolves, the pigs, and the chestnuts, should insult me. Adieu, my child; I love you with my whole heart, in every sense of the word, without abating a tittle.

LETTER 351

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, October 20, 1675.

I cannot sufficiently admire the diligence and fidelity of the post. I received on the eighteenth, your letter of the ninth, that is, in nine days only after date; which is all that can be desired.

But, my dear child, we must now very soon put an end to our admirations; for, as you say, you are going still further off, that we may both be exactly in the spot which Providence has assigned us. For my part, God knows, I acquit myself very ill in my residence; but you, heavens! M. d'Angers (*H. Arnauld*) cannot do more; when I think,

however, of our separation, and how much I deserve to enjoy the pleasure of being with you, and of all your affection for me, and then reflect that we are placed at two different ends of the globe, you must excuse me if I cannot view this part of our history with gaiety of heart. Common sense opposes it, and my infinite love still more. I have nothing to do but take refuge in submission to the will of Providence. I am very glad you have seen M. de La Garde: he does me great honour in approving my turn of mind; he is a very good judge: I am sorry you are going to lose him so soon, for he is really a worthy man. Your conversations must have been endless. So he is to take the Archbishop away to La Garde: it was very well said of him, that he was like a river which fertilised and made every country flourish through which it passed: I find he did wonders at Grignan.

M. de Chaulnes is at Rennes with four thousand men; he has removed the Parliament to Vannes, which has occasioned a terrible desolation. The ruin of Rennes brings with it that of the whole Province. Madame de Marbeuf is at Vitré; she has brought me a thousand compliments from Madame de Chaulnes, and from M. de Vins, who intends paying me a visit. I am not under the least apprehension about these troops on my own account: but I cannot help feeling for the despair and desolation our poor Province suffers at present. It is supposed we shall not have any Assembly of the States here, or if we have, it will be only to buy off the taxes which we gave two million five hundred thousand livres to have taken off only two years ago, and which have been all laid upon our shoulders again; and perhaps they may set a price too upon bringing the Parliament back to Rennes. M. de Montmoron [1] is fled out of the town, to a seat belonging to one of his friends, at about three leagues distance from hence, that he may avoid hearing the cries and lamentations of the people at seeing their dear Parliament removed. You see I am quite a Breton, but you know it

[1] He was a Sévigné, and Dean of the Parliament of Brittany.

is owing to the air I breathe; and to something else, for every creature, without distinction, is in affliction throughout the Province. Be under no concern about my health, my dearest child; I am extremely well. Madame de Tarente has given me an essence that has cured her of vapours that were worse than mine: two drops are to be taken for fifteen days following in any beverage that is drunk at table, and it cures effectually. She has told me circumstances of its efficacy which have all the air of those in the comedy of the *Médecin Forcé*; but I believe them all, and I would take some of the essence now if it were not that I think it a pity to make use of so admirable a remedy when I have no real occasion for it. I will send you some time or other the remainder of the prosperities of the boat[1]. You will make La Plessis too vain, for I shall tell her how much you love her; except what I told you the other day, I do not think a better creature exists: she is here every day. I have some of your excellent Queen of Hungary water in my pocket: I am quite in love with it; it cures all my sorrows: I wish I could send some of it to Rennes. My woods continue very beautiful still, and the verdure is a hundred times finer than that at Livry; I do not know whether this proceeds from the nature of the trees themselves, or from the refreshing rains we have here; but there is certainly no comparison; everything here looks as green now as in the month of May: the leaves that fall are brown it is true, but those that remain on the trees are not at all faded: you never observed this beauty in them. As to that blessed tree that saved your life, I am often tempted to build a little chapel there: it seems to carry its head above all the rest, and exceeds them in bulk as well as stature, and with very good reason, for it saved you: I may, at least, repeat to it the stanza of *Médor* in Ariosto, in which he wishes happiness and peace to the cave that had given him so much pleasure. Our sayings cut in the bark of the trees are not at all dis-

[1] This is perhaps an allusion to the manner in which the Princesse de La Trémouille conducted her affairs at the Court of Copenhagen.

figured, I visit them frequently; I think they are rather increased, and two trees that are close to each other, often present us with two contrary sentiments, *La lontananza ogni gran piaga salda*[1]: and, *Piaga d'amor non si sana mai*[2]. There are five or six thus contradictory. The good Princesse was charmed with them, as I am with the letter you have written our good Abbé, on Jacob's journey to the Land of Promise, in your private sitting room.

Madame de Lavardin has informed me of what is still to be kept secret for a few days longer, that d'Olonne is going to marry his brother to Mademoiselle de Noirmoutier. He gives him all his lands in Poitou, besides a great quantity of jewels and furniture. They are all at La Ferté-Milon, where this curious affair is to be consummated. I never thought d'Olonne would have given himself any concern about his name or family.

LETTER 352

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, October 23, 1675.

I received your letter, my dear, just as I was going to Vitré. What you say relating to the Princesse is so natural, so seasonable, so exactly what I wished, that I thank you for it a thousand times. I read to Madame de Tarente that part of your letter which relates to her, and she was delighted with it. Her daughter is ill, but not so ill but that she still receives letters from her, but they are all in an unfinished style, full of *dear mammas,* and childish expressions of affection, though she is twenty years old. Both her lovers are in the field at the war.

MADAME writes Madame de Tarente very long letters in German, which I get her to translate to me. Her Highness writes to her with great familiarity and kindness, and

[1] Time is a cure for wounds, however deep. [Translation.]

[2] The wounds of love are never to be healed. [Translation.]

expresses a strong desire to have her with her. I have a notion that Madame de Monaco would have reason to be afraid of our Princesse, if she were a Catholic, for her place would suit the latter admirably; and MADAME declares that she shall never be happy till she has her about her. Madame de Monaco was one day a little hard upon the good Tarente; when MADAME, notwithstanding the great seeming regard she has for her, appeared displeased, and immediately silenced her.

Madame de Chaulnes is to come to Vitré to pay a visit to the Princesse, and I shall there have an opportunity of paying my respects to my Lady governess, and the little personage [1], which will save me a great deal of trouble. Madame de Marbeuf has been with me for a day; she professes great esteem for me; she has really many excellent qualities, and a heart that is noble and sincere. She has been an eye-witness of all the disturbances in our Province, and acts some of them to the life. There are circumstances which would make you die with laughing, and which you would hardly credit; but some day or other when we are together, they will serve admirably to pass away an hour or two. She is going to Digne for the rheumatism; she will call to see you; pray receive her as one of my friends. D'Hacqueville assures me that during the time of your Assembly he will take care to furnish you with news. I have returned him many thanks for his care. He tells me that our Parliament is removed, and that M. de Chaulnes is at Rennes with a number of troops, and all this with *his own hand* [2].

Our Cardinal is not only *recardinalised,* but has had an order at the same time from His Holiness, to leave his retreat at St.-Mihel, and return to Commerci, where he now is: I fancy he will live very retired there, and leave off all state and house-keeping. So now he is just what we always wished him to be. In my opinion His Holiness

[1] Mademoiselle de Murinais, afterwards Marquise de Kerman.

[2] He was so fond of writing, and of being thought a man of intelligence, that he even informed Madame de Sévigné of things that passed on the very spot where she was.

has acted very properly throughout this affair. The letter from the Consistory is a perfect panegyric: I should be unwilling to die without once more embracing his dear Eminence. You should by all means write to him, and not forsake him under the false notion of his being in the third region. One can never be so abstracted as not to be pleased with marks of remembrance from those we love.

You are afraid, my child, that the wolves should eat me; that must be when they can get nothing else; they might perhaps make a pretty good meal of my little person, but I am so surrounded by my infantry, that I fear nothing. Beaulieu[1] desires you will believe that he intends to make his court to you, by the care he takes of *mamma*. His wife is not brought to bed yet; those creatures never know how to reckon. You desire me, my dearest, to leave you in the *capucine*[2] sometimes, when I take my walks; but indeed I will not, for I should then make my walks too short, so I am resolved to take you with me, even though I expose you to the dews a little; the dews here are not dangerous, they will do your complexion as much good as a cosmetic.

I cannot set about distinguishing the rights of the *other*[3]; I am persuaded they are very extensive, but when we love to a certain degree, and our whole heart is filled with that passion, I think it is very difficult to make so nice a distinction; but in this respect, every one acts as he pleases, or as he can. I do not find that we have always the power of regulating the sentiments in this case; happy are they, who have the appearance of reason on their side. At all events, I am persuaded, that you will prevent my becoming ridiculous; and on my side, I endeavour to govern myself as prudently as I can, and to be troublesome to no one. This is all I know of the matter.

Madame de Tarente has made me a present of the

[1] A valet of Madame de Sévigné's.

[2] A cottage in the grounds of *The Rocks*.

[3] Madame de Sévigné is speaking here of the rights of love and friendship, and by the word *other*, she means love.

prettiest little dog in the world; it is a spaniel, and has all the beauty, good nature, and agreeable little tricks imaginable, but it does not attach itself to me; I am easy, however, about that, for I can despise those, who have despised poor *Marphise*. It is very amusing to see the little creature running before me, hunting up and down the alleys.

The Archbishop of Arles has informed us of the excellent order in which he has put your affairs; God be praised, and may He watch over them for the time to come. He mentions likewise, the marriage of Mademoiselle de Grignan, which I greatly approve: this affair should by no means be neglected. Employ d'Hacqueville in it, during the absence of the Coadjutor; he is an excellent creature, to conquer delays of all kinds, by his indefatigableness, and assiduity; you want such a head as his, to carry the matter on properly with M. de Montausier; it is one of the things in which d'Hacqueville is unrivalled.

I thought I had been too rude in refusing Madame de Fontevrault[1] the portrait; for as everyone is ready to offer himself up there soul and body, I thought it showed very little of the courtier, or indeed of politeness, in me, not to do like the rest; but you do not blame me, and I am content. Have I mentioned to you a rude speech of *Quanto's* friend (the King) to M. de La Rochefoucauld's son (Marsillac)? I have it from good authority. The subject of conversation was vapours. The son said they arose from a certain charcoal, which was very evident upon seeing a fountain mended. The friend said aloud to *Quanto*: "My God! how hateful are persons who wish to reason upon everything! For my part, I think nothing so silly." As this style is unusual, everybody was surprised at it, and knew not what to do; but it was repaired by a thousand courtesies, and no more was thought of it. What strange things vapours are! Adieu, my dearest child; I will not say any more about my love for you, but say something about yours to me, and about all that concerns

[1] Sister of Madame de Montespan.

you. Madame d'Escars is at Poitou with her daughter; happy woman!

There is a person in this country, who writes a great many letters, and for fear he should mistake one for the other, he always takes care to direct the outside before he writes the letter. This whim caused me to laugh exceedingly [1].

LETTER 353

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, October 27, 1675.

I have had no letters from you, my dear, lovely child, which makes me very melancholy: it never enters into my head, that it is by any fault of yours; I know your attention, and impute it all to the confusion you are in at leaving Grignan. Madame de Chaulnes, and *the little person,* have been to Vitré to see the Princesse de Tarente. She first sent her compliments to me, informing me she would wait upon me; I dined there the next day. She received me with great joy, and entertained me two full hours with affection and eagerness, giving me an account of their conduct for these six months past, how much she had suffered, and what danger she had run: she knows that I have an extensive correspondence, and might possibly have heard things differently represented. I thanked her for the honour she did me, in this mark of her confidence. In short, the Province has been very much to blame: but it is severely punished, and, perhaps, may never be able to recover itself again. There are five thousand troops at Rennes, half of which are to pass the winter there, which will be long enough to get *little ones* [2], as Maréchal de

[1] This man is the Abbé de Coulanges, whom she does not name, apparently thinking that this circumspection would render her little malice more pardonable.

[2] See Letter 328, of 19th August, 1675, in the second volume.

Gramont said. Forbin, and Vins, are heartily tired of their occupation[1]. The latter sent me his compliments, and I suppose I shall see him here. They are to return in a fortnight, but their troops are to remain behind. Twenty or thirty persons are apprehended already, and will be hanged. The Parliament is removed, that is the finishing stroke: for without it, Rennes is not of so much consequence as Vitré. Madame de Tarente has saved us from the contributions: I will not say all that M. de Chaulnes has written to me, but were I Governess of the Province, I could not be more secure of the care he will take of Sévigné, which, you know, lies just at the gates of Rennes. I went to sleep at the Tower[2], and by eight o'clock this morning, I had the good Princesse, and the Duchesse, at my levee. M. de St.-Malo was with us at Vitré; he is almoner to Madame de Chaulnes.

I was perfectly rejoiced to return here; I am making a new walk, which employs me wholly. I pay my workmen in corn; and find nothing so profitable as to amuse one's self, and forget, if possible, the evils of life. Neither do my evenings, my child, about which you are so much in pain, hang more heavily on my hands: I am almost always writing, or reading, and midnight overtakes me before I know where I am. Our Abbé takes his leave of me at ten, and the two hours that I am alone, are no more irksome to me than the rest. During the day, I am either employed with the Abbé, or among my dear labourers, or in my favourite work. In short, my dear, life flies away so swiftly, and we are always drawing so near our end, that I cannot conceive how people can make themselves so unhappy about worldly affairs. I have here sufficient time for reflection, and it is my fault, and not that of the place, if I do not indulge it. I am quite well; all my people obey you admirably: they are ridiculously careful of me; they come to guard me home in the evening armed *cap-a-*

[1] They were sent at the head of the soldiery to chastise the Province.

[2] The Tower of Sévigné, the old family seat.

pe[1], and it is against a squirrel they draw their swords.

I have received an admirable letter from the Coadjutor: he complains extremely at your raillery, and begs me very earnestly to revenge him, assuring me, that if I abandon him, God will not. He has sent me his speech, which loses nothing by being in print; it is a finished performance; he has likewise sent me the letter you wrote him upon it, which is very pointed, and full of wit; there are strokes in it that are admirably suited to him, than whom, no one understands raillery better. Well, he is fallen into good hands: I cannot sufficiently love him for sending me that letter; it is of double value to me just now, that I have none from you myself: I had a great mind to have written you the very same thing you say to him, I mean about your Bishops: you must have seen that I thought the same.

I am impatient to hear from you: I am sensible of the vexation it gave you to be obliged to quit your country-house, your liberty, and your tranquillity. The Ceremonial Code, is a book you are not very fond of studying. Adieu, my love: I am wholly yours, and embrace you with all my heart. If M. de Grignan has time to come for it, I will give him an embrace too. The good behaviour, and peaceable disposition, of your Province, have for ever given the lie to the rules of physiognomy.

They tell me, there is great talk of peace: I wish it may prove so; I fancy it would be better for all parties: we wished for war too; we are always uneasy, and shifting from side to side, in hopes of finding out a good place at last.

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[1] From top to toe. [Translation.]

LETTER 354

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, October 30, 1675.

Good heavens! my dear child, can any thing be more entertaining than your letter from Aix? Let me desire you to read your letters over before you send them, that the pleasure you will have in the perusal, may make you amends for the trouble you have been at, in writing them. So you have kissed all Provence? there would be no great pleasure, I assure you, in kissing all Brittany, unless you loved the smell of wine. You have been very particular in the cares, caresses, and distinctions, you bestowed on the good Baroness; you know in what light I have always considered her; I should certainly have advised you to make use of the diminishing end of your telescope with her. You do not mention Roquesante, nor the good Cardinal[1]; I am so attached to ours at Commerci[2], that for his sake I love all red hats that are worthily worn; but hold, and ever shall hold, myself offended with all others: what you say on that subject, is very just.

M. de Marseilles[3] has been described to us, as armed *cap-a-pe,* with his sword in his hand, by the side of the King of Poland, having had two horses killed under him, and pursuing the Tartars, as Archbishop Turpin did the Saracens: in his present situation, I fancy he would most sovereignly despise the little Assembly at Lambesc. Will you have some news of Rennes? A tax of one hundred thousand crowns is laid upon the citizens, which if they do not raise within four and twenty hours, it is to be doubled, and then raised by military execution. The inhabitants of a whole street have been turned out of their houses, and

[1] Cardinal Grimaldi, Archbishop of Aix.

[2] Cardinal de Retz, who had retired to Commerci.

[3] Then Ambassador to Poland.

banished; with express orders, that no one shall presume to entertain them in their houses, under pain of death; so that you might see these poor wretches, men, women, and children, old and young, some of the women having just laid in, all wandering about the out-skirts of the town, without a morsel to eat, or a bed to lie upon. The day before yesterday, a musician was broken upon the wheel, and his quarters stuck up in four different parts of the town, like those of *Josseran*[1] at Aix; for having been the first that promoted the plundering the stamp-office. At his death, he declared it was the farmers of the stamp revenue who had set him on to stir up the rest, and that they had given him twenty-five crowns for the purpose; he persisted in this to the last, but they could get nothing else out of him. Sixty of the citizens are already in custody, and to-morrow the execution is to begin. This Province has set a fine example to the rest, particularly to be careful of paying proper respect to their Governors, and Governors' wives, and not presume to throw stones into their garden. I told you how Madame de Tarente had protected us all here. She was with me yesterday in my woods; it was a delightful day: she has laid aside all ceremony now, and comes and goes like one of the family. She showed me letters from Denmark. The favourite has all the letters of the Princesse brought, as if by mistake, to the army, that he may have an excuse to enclose them to her, with a line or two from himself in favour of his passion.

But to return to Brittany: every village is to furnish its quota towards maintaining the soldiers; now we give our provisions to save our bread; formerly we used to carry them to market, and get money for them, but that fashion is entirely changed. M. de Molac has returned to Nantes; M. de Lavardin is coming to Rennes. Everybody pities poor M. d'Harouïs[2]; we cannot conceive how he will man-

[1] A villain who had murdered his master, a gentleman of Provence, of the family of Pontevez.

[2] Treasurer-General of the States of Brittany.

age, nor what demands will be made upon the State, supposing they should be assembled: in short, you may now reckon that there is no longer such a Province as Brittany, which is a pity. My son is very much alarmed that the Chevalier de Lauzun should be permitted to resign his commission: we have written to M. de La Trousse, who will speak to M. de Louvois, that our poor ensign may rise without expense; we shall see what will be the effect. D'Hacqueville will be able to tell you more than I can: I have one consolation, however, that there is a wide difference between having a commission to sell, and having a purchaser for it. The time is past when six years ago I gave M. de Louvois twenty-five thousand crowns, a month sooner than I had promised it him: we could not now find ten thousand francs in the whole Province. They do Messieurs de Forbin and de Vins the honour to say, that they are heartily weary of being here, and grow very impatient to be gone. I think I told you of the pretty match between Mademoiselle de Noirmoutier, and the brother of d'Olonne. What Monceaux has done for M. de Turenne is very fine: I do not much like the word *amongst* in such a trifling work.

LETTER 355

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, November 3, 1675.

I am wholly occupied with your affairs in Provence; and if you take an interest in those of Denmark, I take a much greater in what passes at Lambesc. I wait for the issue of the defence that is to be made in Parliament, to be sent to the Guildhall: I wait for the nomination of an attorney of the Province, and the success of the journey of your Consul, who would fain be a noble by the King's order. I have been highly diverted with your first President, and the effects of his jealousy; and cannot help

thinking that they did him great injustice to suppose, that a person brought up in Paris, should not know better how to behave himself; and would not rather give two or three boxes on the ear, than as many blows with the flat of a sword: I am surprised that he could be jealous of a boy who smelt of tobacco; but there is no figure that is not formidable in some eyes. I am thinking, that our wine-smelling Bretons would be very good matches for your tobacco-scented Provençals.

I always wonder how a man can make a speech in public without faltering, or missing some part, when the eyes of a whole Assembly are upon him, and a profound silence observed while he is speaking. This is for you, M. le Comte: I am heartily rejoiced to find you possess a boldness superior to anything to which I could ever pretend: but after all, my dear child, it is so much time lost, to speak so long, and so ably, when there is nobody to hear. I am as angry as you can be, that neither the Bishop nor the Controller was present at the opening of the Assembly. I think there cannot be more unbecoming conduct, nor a greater affront put upon the King, and the person who has the honour to represent him. If they wait till M. de Marseilles returns from his Embassy, they may wait a long time; for there is no great likelihood of his making one amongst them. I have complained of it to d'Hacqueville; that is all I can do at this distance, and all that can be done this year: shall you not mention it to Madame de Vins? She has written me a very sprightly and pretty letter, complaining of my silence: she is jealous of my writing to others; she is determined to undeceive M. de Pomponne with respect to my love for him: she knows not what she will not do; I never saw such a little bundle of thorns. I have answered her letter, saying I rejoiced to find she was growing affectionate, and talking of jealously without any interlineations: I did not think she could write so well; she talks much of you, and attacks me with great humour.

M. Boucherat, and M. de Harlay his son-in-law, dined

with me on All-Saints' day. They are going to our States, which are to be opened when everyone is assembled: they repeated the speech to me, it is a very good one: the presence of M. Boucherat will be of great service to this Province, and likewise to M. d'Harouïs. M. and Madame de Chaulnes are no longer at Rennes: the punishments begin to slacken a little, and they have done hanging, for want of people to hang: there are but two thousand soldiers remaining at Rennes. I fancy Forbin and Vins will return by way of Nantes: Molac has gone already. It was M. de Pomponne who protected that poor wretch I mentioned to you. If you will send me the romance of your first President, I will, in return, send you the lamentable ditty of the poor fiddler who was broken on the wheel at Rennes. M. Boucherat drinks your health; he is a very agreeable and sensible man: he came through Veret. At Blois he saw Madame de Maintenon, and the Duc du Maine, who is able to walk again: this has occasioned great joy. Madame de Montespan went to meet the dear little Prince, and with her the Abbess de Fontevrault, and Madame de Thianges. I am in hopes this happy excursion will contribute to reconcile the two friends again.

You give me great pleasure, my dearest child, by taking so much care of my grand-daughter. I am convinced of the readiness with which you endeavour in every instance to oblige me. I know not why you should say that absence disturbs the order of love; the only evil I find it occasions, is the pain it makes us endure: I am quite ignorant of the charms of inconstancy, and I think I can answer for myself, and for every heart over which you extend your empire, that there is not one which does not pay you the same allegiance as when you left it. Is it not very generous of me to undertake thus to answer for the hearts of others? of mine, at least, there can be no doubt. I fancy you are not so much infatuated with your son as you used to be; I think the fault is yours, for he has too much sense not to be always handsome: you do not yet understand thoroughly the force of maternal love; so

much the better, my child, it is violent; but without such reasons as mine, which are not often to be found, this excess may be admirably dispensed with. When I am in Paris, we will talk of seeing each other again: the desire and hope of this are the support of my existence.

Adieu, my ever dear child; I should be delighted as well as you, if we could ally ourselves with the Maccabees; but that does not seem to go on well: I hope your reading goes on better; it would be a stain you could never wash out, were you to leave *Josephus*[1] unfinished: alas! did you know what I am finishing, and how much I suffer from the style of the Jesuit[2], you would pity me; but you are truly happy to have so charming a book[3].

LETTER 356

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, November 6, 1675.

What a delightful letter you have written to me, my dear child! what thanks do I not owe you, for employing your hand, your eyes, your head, your time, in composing so agreeable a volume! I have read it over and over, and shall read it again with pleasure and attention. I can read nothing that is more interesting; you satisfy my curiosity in everything I wish; I admire your care in giving me such punctual answers. This makes a conversation perfect, regular, and extremely entertaining. But I must beg you not to destroy yourself; this fear makes me renounce the pleasure of having frequently such entertainments: you cannot doubt my generosity in sparing you the fatigue of too much writing.

I comprehend with pleasure the high esteem that is paid to M. de Grignan in Provence, after what I have

[1] Author of the *Jewish Antiquities.*

[2] Maimbourg.

[3] *History of the Jews,* translated by M. Arnauld d'Andilly.

seen of it. This is a pleasure you are scarcely sensible of; you are too much accustomed to be loved and honoured in a Province where you command. If you saw the horror, the detestation, the hatred, that the people have here for their Governor, you would feel more than you do the pleasure of being adored everywhere. What affronts! what injuries! what menaces! what reproaches! the very stones fly round him. I do not believe M. de Grignan would accept this post upon such conditions.

You mention to me the paper you have signed so heroically in favour of M. de Grignan [1]. You say you had no doubt which way the honourable sentiments of Cardinal de Retz [2] inclined: I do not say anything of mine; it was enough that you could discern what his counsels tended to. In certain delicate affairs, we do not presume directly to advise, but we represent the case; the common friends of both do what is proper, that there may be no jarring opposition in the interest of those they love: but with a soul so perfectly generous and good as yours, we consult only ourselves, and act precisely as you have done. Have you not seen how much you have been admired? Are you not pleased that you owe to none but yourself so noble a resolution? You would have done nothing blamable, if you had refused to sign; you would only have acted like the rest of the world; but by consenting to it, you have exceeded all the world. In a word, my child, enjoy the beauty of your own action, and do not think meanly of us for not having prompted you to it: on a similar occasion, we should perhaps have acted as you have done, and you would have advised as we did; it is all well. I am very much pleased that M. de Grignan is so good as to recompense this mark of your friendship and affection by a greater attention to his affairs: the prudence you commend him for, is the truest mark of his gratitude you could have wished.

[1] It appears that Madame de Grignan had entered into a Bond for her husband.

[2] Cardinal de Retz advised her not to sign.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *writes also to the Comte* DE GRIGNAN.

Comte, I am delighted to hear my daughter is satisfied with you: allow me to thank you by reason of the great interest I take in your affairs, and which I entreat you to preserve. You cannot fail of this without ingratitude, and without doing injustice to the blood of the Adhémars. I have read, in the *Crusades*, of one of these who was an illustrious personage six hundred years ago. He was beloved as you are, and would never have given a moment's uneasiness to such a wife as yours. His death was lamented by an army of three hundred thousand men, and mourned by all the Princes of Christendom. Not many pages after, I find a Castellane, not altogether so ancient: he is indeed a mere modern; it was but five hundred and twenty years since he made a great figure. I conjure you, therefore, by these two noble ancestors, who are my particular friends, to be guided by Madame de Grignan, and consider how much you will consult your own interest in doing so.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *continues and concludes her letter to her Daughter.*

You see, my child, that without intending it, or thinking of it, I have written a long letter to M. de Grignan. Your confidence with the Controller upon the two houses who make so much noise at M. L***'s is very amusing. I love to attack, on all occasions like this, certain persons who think themselves of so much consequence that we dare not approach them. We need only take courage; their menaces are like the false fires of the magician in *Tasso*. In my opinion, lying so palpably in a known matter of fact like this, is tendering false money, like Pomenars.

If I were to write from this time till to-morrow, I should not be able to tell you how much your episode of

Messina[1] has amused me. This piece is an original: the Prince and Minister are both admirable characters. But what, then, is become of the valour Messina boasted of in his youth? He appears to me at present like the Comte de Culagna in the *Secchia*[2]: or like the figure of Sleep in Ariosto, or that of Indolence as it is painted by Despréaux in the *Lutrin*: but it is not possible for him to remain long in this state. I shall preserve your portrait of him very carefully: it could not have been more excellently done by Mignard.

I follow your example with respect to Madame du Janet. I wish to remember nothing but her kindness, her attachment to you, and the tears we have shed together. I beg you to embrace her for me, and to let me know if my remembrance gives her any pleasure. I should be very glad to hear that the marriage of our daughter was likely to be effected. If you have no friend near M. de Montausier, employ d'Hacqueville in it. He may as well be killed wholly, as partially. I had designed to have spared him a little; but I have fallen on him afresh, and do him more mischief than all the rest of his friends. Let me advise you to deal with him like me; he is an inexhaustible friend. Since you do not pity me though I am surrounded with troops, and doubt that my confidence is founded upon my safety, you will pity me, when you hear that there are two thousand five hundred men less in Rennes; that is very cruel, after having had five thousand: there are passages in your letters that are quite luminous.

The good Cardinal, as you know, is at Commerci since his *brief*; I suppose he will live in the same retirement there: but it seems to me that vespers do not accord well with a Castle. I should think also, he liked to take medicine as well at Saint-Mihel, as not to take it. He was not

[1] Messina had revolted against the Spaniards with the assistance of the French. The Maréchal de Vivonne had, in the sight of a Spanish fleet which remained inactive, brought them a supply of corn and of troops.

[2] A mock-heroic poem in Italian, which is thought to have given the first hint to Despréaux for his *Lutrin*.

so docile in Paris. You, my child, are still the same in this respect: you think vespers darker than ever: do you remember the follies of my son?

You are always very wicked when you speak of Madame de La Fayette: I shall send her some trifling remembrances on your part: she often writes to me with her own hand, but it is true, they are only notes; for she has a pain in her side, which you know she used to have, that is very dangerous; she never leaves her room, and has not been a single day at Saint-Maur; judge in what a weak state she must be. M. de La Rochefoucauld has the gout; if, notwithstanding a milk diet, the gout takes this liberty with him every year, it will be a great affliction. Madame de Coulanges is returning to Paris; she has been long enough confined with her unreasonable mother. M. de Coulanges is much obliged to you for your reproaches: he would have come to see you, if he had been able. He saw the poor Rochebonne in the most gloomy abode in all France: I very much pity her. Why cannot she go to Lyons? Madame de Verneuil was there in November; Madame de Coulanges, Cardinal de Bonzi, and Briole, were with her: was it not Paris? Briole owes all his good fortune to his good looks: he is a lucky fellow, and we others lose everything.

I am glad you like Josephus, Herod, and Aristobulus. I beg you to go on, and see the end of the siege of Jerusalem, and the fate of Jehoshaphat. Take courage; everything is beautiful in this historian, everything is grand, everything is magnificent, everything is worthy of you; let not an idle fancy prevail with you to lay him aside. I am in the *History of France*; that of the *Crusades* has occasioned my looking into it, but it is not to be compared to a single leaf of Josephus. Alas! with what pleasure we weep over the misfortunes of Aristobulus and Mariamne!

There are in your book, as you please to term your letter, a thousand entertaining histories and episodes; and I have spent two hours in writing mere nothings to you.

I have, in a word, the rage of talking myself out of breath, like the doctor in the Italian comedy. However, I conclude, and embrace you with extreme tenderness. I am perfectly well, the evenings are long, and it rains: this is all I have to inform you of.

Why, my dear, do you tell me that I shall finish the reading of the voluminous epistle you have sent me with yawning out,

Ah, que les grands parleurs sont par moi détestés [1]!

M. de Tulle [2] has surpassed our expectations, in his Funeral Oration on M. de Turenne: it is a piece worthy of immortality.

LETTER 357

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, November 10, 1675.

I am grieved, my child, that I have received no letter from you by this post; and I find by this little vexation, how great a comfort it is to hear from a person we truly love. It seems to bring us nearer to each other: we are entertained with a thousand thoughts it presents to the mind; and though they are sometimes mingled with grief, yet even this is preferable to ignorance.

We have a little Saint-Martin's summer, cold, but pleasant, which I like better than continual rains. I live always out of doors, like a wild beast. The vivacity of my humour depends so much on the weather, that if you would know the temper of mind I am in, you need only consult the stars. But Provence will always tell you wonders; fine weather is no novelty to you; you are too much accustomed to it: while we, who seldom see the sun in his full lustre, are in raptures, when we feel his kindly influence. Many fine reflections might have been made on this subject; but this is enough of rain and sunshine.

[1] How much I detest great talkers! [Translation.]

[2] M. Mascaron, Bishop of Tulle.

M. de Vins has been for a month at Rennes, saying every day he should come to see me, that he was a friend of mine, and related to the Grignans. M. and Madame de Chaulnes, Madame de Marbeuf, Tonquedec, and Coëtlogon, talked to him of me, and of my beautiful walks: he joined them, but it was great cry and little wool, for he passed through Guerche, which is only three leagues from hence, without coming near me; I would have laid a wager that he would not come: my child, there are some who go, and some who stay. Forbin and he have smitten the hearts of two ladies at Rennes, sisters: these loves are very constant: the flowers of our fields are not more transient, but no season of love must be lost.

Madame de Lavardin sends me the news she receives from Paris: this is pleasant to me: her correspondents are, the Marquise d'Uxelles, the Abbé de La Victoire, Longueil, and some others. No surprise could have been more agreeable than the one that was prepared for the King: he did not expect M. du Maine till the next day: he saw him walk into his apartment supported only by the hand of Madame de Maintenon, who led him; it was a transport of joy. M. de Louvois went to see the Governess on her arrival: she supped at Madame de Richelieu's; some kissed her hand, others her gown, but she must have laughed at them all in her sleeve, if she is not very much changed, which it is said she really is. Madame de Coulanges is to return: I never doubted this. Nothing is talked of but M. de Tulle's admirable Funeral Oration: there is but one opinion respecting it. His text was: "O Lord, thou hast searched and known me;" which he treated most divinely. I have a great desire to see it in print.

This, my dear child, is what may be called chat, for I cannot pretend to furnish you with news at a thousand leagues distance. Some correspondence is very entertaining. I advise you to ask M. de Coulanges to send you, in my absence, some trifles, that are often as interesting as public affairs. They say it is not true that M. de Bailleul is selling his commission. I suppose you will say of this

as you did of M. de Champlâtreux's mouth, which approached rather too near his eye, "Is it not as well there as anywhere else?" Is it true that the army of Catalonia is going to punish Bordeaux in the same way that Rennes has been punished? I have no faith in Ruyter: it is vain for you to tell me he is in the Mediterranean; it is a dream. Was not the same thing said last year? and you know it was not true. My son believes M. de Louvois will continue his kind distinctions to him, in making him purchase the colours, in order to rise; this is worse than the nine hundred leagues, but what is to be done? This pretty circumstance makes his return uncertain.

LETTER 358

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, November 13, 1675.

Here they are both, my dear; and I suppose I should have received them in due time, had it not been that the post stopped a day at Versailles. Whatever taste you may have for my letters, they can never be to you what yours are to me; and since it has pleased heaven, that they are the only comfort I have left, I think myself very happy in thus admiring them: but indeed, my child, it is very painful to see so long a continuance of them, without the hopes of enjoying the company of one so dear to me as the writer is. I can scarcely reconcile myself to this hardship; all my thoughts, all my reflections, are darkened by it, and it requires a courage to which I have no pretension, to bear so extraordinary a fate. I regret every day that passes, and hurries me along without giving me time to be with you. I regret my life; and feel that I shall resign it with less sorrow, since all its arrangements are disagreeable to me. These thoughts, my dear, make me weep oftener than I tell you, and I shall deserve your sermons in spite of myself, and more frequently than I wish, for

I never willingly give way to these melancholy reflections, but they take possession of my heart without my being able to resist them. I am very angry with myself, my child, for not having been sufficiently mistress of this lively sentiment to-day; I am not accustomed to yield to it. But let us call another subject: it is one of my sad amusements, to compare this year with the last: what a difference! what delightful society did I then enjoy in the evenings! what happiness to see you, to meet you, to converse with you at all times! how agreeably was my affection requited! Of these happy days nothing escapes me, except the days themselves, which, too truly, are passed. I have not, however, the grief of not having felt my happiness: this is a reproach I can never make to myself; but for this reason I feel the contrast more severely.

You do not tell me, whether you have been sufficiently well treated in your Assembly, to be quit to the King for the usual gift: ours is increased; I thought I should have beaten the honest Boucherat when I saw the augmentation. I do not see how we are to pay the half of it. The States are to open to-morrow at Dinan. The poor Parliament are all sick at Vannes. Rennes is like a desert; the punishments and taxes are unmerciful: I might write from this time till to-morrow, were I to repeat the tragic stories I hear. La Marbeuf will not return again; she has settled her affairs, and is going to reside in Paris. I was thinking Mademoiselle de Méri would do very well to take a house with her; she is a sensible woman, has an excellent carriage, and, what will make it still more convenient, they need be together only when they choose it themselves. I know she will be glad of an opportunity to oblige me, and be in a place where she can see me now and then: between this and Easter, Mademoiselle de Méri is to ask M. d'Effiat for an apartment. I have given La Troche a hint of all these things.

I often find, my dear, that I answer you, like *Trivelin*, in advance, upon the subjects of my health and M. de Vins: you have not, therefore, to wait three weeks. It is

a reflection worthy of remark, that, with all our wonderings it is only nine days, from the third to the eleventh, that our letters are upon the road; but it is three weeks before we can say, *I am very well, I thank you.*

You are surprised at my having a little dog; the history is this. One day I was calling a little dog that belongs to a lady, who lives at the end of my park; Madame de Tarente said, "What! are you fond of dogs? I will send you one of the prettiest creatures that ever was seen." I thanked her, but told her that I had made a resolution never again to indulge myself in a folly of that kind: so the subject was dropped, and I thought no more of it. A few days after, I saw a footman bringing a little dog-house in his arms, decorated with ribbons, and out of this house jumped a little sylph-like dog, all perfumed, of uncommon beauty, with fine large ears, breath as sweet as a rose, and a coat white as snow, and soft as silk. I never was more surprised; I would have returned it, but the servant would not take it back: the poor chamber-maid who had brought it up, was, it seems, ready to die with grief for the loss of it. It is Marie [1] who is so fond of the little dog; he sleeps in his house, or in Beaulieu's room, and eats nothing but bread. I do not give way to my fondness for it, but it begins to love and make much of me, and I am afraid of yielding at last. This is the history, with which I desire you will not acquaint Marphise [2], for I dread her reproaches: but it is the cleanliest little animal you ever beheld; its name is *Fidèle*, a name I am afraid the lovers of the Princesse never merited, though they have been of some consequence too. I will amuse you some day or other with the relation of her adventures. Her style, it is true, is full of faintings and romance, and I do not think she has had sufficient leisure to love her daughter, at least, in the degree I love mine. More than one heart would be necessary to love so many things at once, and I daily perceive that the great fish devour the little ones. If you are,

[1] One of Madame de Sévigné's servants.

[2] A favourite dog of Madame de Sévigné's.

as you say, my preservative, I am very much obliged to you, and I cannot too highly prize my affection for you. I know not from what dangers it may have guarded me, but if it were from fire and water, it could not be dearer to me than it is. There are times when I wonder at persons wishing it to be supposed that they ever approached within nine hundred leagues of a *Cape.* The good Princesse, however, makes her boast of it, to the great affront of her looking-glass, which daily informs her, that with such a face, she ought to have lost even the remembrance. She loves me extremely: I should not value her acquaintance in Paris, but here, among peasants, it adds to my consequence. Her horses are ill; she cannot come to *The Rocks,* and I do not accustom her to receive my visits oftener than once in a week or ten days: I say to myself, as M. de Bouillon said to his wife: "If I wished to pay my respects in a carriage, and to leave *The Rocks,* I should go to Paris."

Our Saint-Martin's summer still continues, and I walk a great deal: as I am not acquainted with the use of an elbow-chair, I repose *mia corporea salma* in my avenues, where I spend whole days attended only by one footman, and do not return till almost night, when fire and candles make my room cheerful: I hate twilight when I have nobody to chat with; and I had rather be alone in the woods, than alone in a room. This is like plunging up to the neck in water to save one's self from the rain: but anything rather than an armchair. Do not, however, fear the dew, my child; there is none in these walks, which are like galleries; fear nothing but heavy rains, from which I must retire, and I can do nothing which does not injure my eyes: it is to preserve my sight I encounter what you call the dew; my health is very good, be not uneasy about it.

Let me thank you for liking Josephus; is it not the best history in the world? I send you by Ripert the third part of the *Moral Essays,* which I think admirable; you will call it the second, but the second is on the *Education of a Prince*; this is the third. There is likewise a treatise

on self-knowledge which will please you, and another on the use that may be made of bad sermons; which would have been of great service to you on All-Saints' day. You do very well, my dear child, not to forget your Italian: like you, I read a little now and then by way of practice.

What you say respecting M. de Chaulnes is admirable. A man was yesterday broke alive upon the wheel at Rennes (this is the tenth), who confessed his intention to assassinate the Governor: this wretch deserved to die. The physicians of this country are not so complaisant as those of Provence, who acknowledge, out of respect to M. de Grignan, that he has the fever; ours think nothing of the purple fever, with which M. de Chaulnes is really suffering, nor can they be prevailed upon to declare him in danger. When the Parliament was banished, it was proposed, that they should purchase their return, by building a citadel at Rennes; but that illustrious Assembly proudly refused the offer, made a merit of obeying His Majesty's commands instantly, and withdrew themselves with more precipitation than was desired; for had they stayed, the time would have been simply wasted in fruitless negotiations, and they considered the remedy as much worse than the disease.

Our Cardinal is still at Commerci; the Pope does not leave him at liberty to follow his own inclination. Is the Controller's lady with you? You will say, Yes, or No, in three weeks. Alas! my child, you had too good an opinion of me on All-Saints' day: it was the day M. Boucherat and his son-in-law dined here, and I could not therefore perform my religious duties. The Princesse was at Scaramouche's Funeral Oration, to the disgrace of the Catholics: this is a very pretty fancy. I wish the Archbishop may bring about the marriage that is so advantageous to you. My son will, I believe, shortly go into forage-quarters, that is, soon after winter-quarters.

I wish, in my absence, that M. de Coulanges would furnish you with such things as are worth knowing. Mademoiselle de Noirmoutier is to take the name of de Roy-

an[1]: that of d'Olonne is too hard to purify, as you say very justly. Adieu, my dearest child; you are fully persuaded then that I love you more than mothers in general love their children; indeed you are right; you are the darling occupation of my heart, and I faithfully promise you, I will never have any other, even though I should in my walks stumble upon a mill where I might be ground young again. Adieu, my dearest Comtesse; let me know if you sleep, if you eat, if you are sun-burnt or fair, if you have the tooth-ache, if——Good God! what would I not give to see you, and embrace you!

LETTER 359

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, November 17, 1675.

Your conscience must answer for all the fine things you have said of me: you have drawn a most flattering picture of me to the Controller; but I own I had rather have your esteem and approbation than that of the whole world. I find we do not trouble ourselves much about the esteem of any but persons whom we ourselves esteem and love; and it is a mortifying reflection, when we do not receive it from these: from all which, I leave you to judge of my sentiments respecting what you have said of myself.

I told you Madame de Vins had written me a very pretty letter upon her jealousy of Madame de Villars: you never saw such a little bundle of thorns! I have answered her letter, and shall write to her again shortly, for she is of so affectionate a disposition, that I fear she would take a second appearance of forgetfulness too much to

[1] This was the name of her husband to be, who was Marquis de Royan; the title of Comte d'Olonne belonged to his elder brother. The Comtesse d'Olonne is very often mentioned in the *Amours des Gaules*.

heart. As to her husband, you think too well of him, to suppose that it was the orders from Poland which prevented him from coming here; no, my dear, it was the order he always receives from his own timidity which makes him avoid good company. He was a whole day at Laval; he passed within three leagues of my house: all this may be vanity in me, perhaps, but it is nevertheless true. Consider how many reasons he had to call upon me: Provence, Pomponne, Grignan [1].

Yesterday I was at the Princesse's, where I met a gentleman of this country, a very well made man, who had lost an arm in the affair of Altenheim; I asked him a great many questions concerning the battle, and the trouble and confusion into which the army was thrown by the death of M. de Turenne: an account of this kind from a person who has been on the spot, is always curious: at length, but without knowing who I was, he fell upon the subject of the Regiment of Grignan, and its Colonel [2], and believe me, nothing could be more delightful than the natural and unaffected praises he bestowed on that gallant young man; in short, it brought tears into my eyes. During the heat of the fight, the Chevalier gave such proofs of his judgment and bravery as called forth the highest admiration; this officer knew no end of praising him, nor I of hearing him praised. The merit of this brother-in-law of yours is really extraordinary, he is universally beloved; which is what I should not have easily supposed, considering his name of the *petit glorieux*: but no, he is a different being; he is the very soul of the army, as this poor invalid says, who, by the way, is tormented with dreadful pains, every now and then, and in what part think you? why in the fingers of the hand he has lost. I should be glad to be able to account for this extraordinary circumstance, but it is beyond my comprehension. If you can explain it to me, you will do me a great favour.

[1] The Marquis de Vins was a Provençal by birth, brother-in-law of M. de Pomponne, and nearly related to the Grignan family.

[2] The Chevalier de Grignan, brother-in-law of M. de Grignan.

I must now tell you some news about our Province. I have received a whole bundle of letters from Lavardin, d'Harouïs, and M. Boucherat, who have informed me of everything. M. de Harlay demanded a gift of three millions, a sum that is never given but when the King comes to Nantes: for my part, I thought he had only been in jest. But our States, like madmen, immediately complied with it; and at the same time M. de Chaulnes proposed sending a deputation to the King to assure His Majesty of the loyalty of this Province, and the grateful sense it had of his goodness in sending down troops to restore the public tranquillity; and that the nobility and gentry were not concerned in the late disturbances. M. de St.-Malo immediately booted himself as the Deputy for the Clergy, and Tonquedec for the Nobility; but M. de Rohan, as President of the States, wished also to go, and to take another. They all passed through Vitré, the day before yesterday: but it is an unheard-of thing, for the President of the Nobility to take such a step. We have but one example of the kind in history, and that is of a Portuguese General, who left his army to the mercy of the enemy, to carry in person the news of a victory he had gained over the Castilians. We know not what to think of this deputation; for my part, I consider it as settled and concerted beforehand, and that at their return they will bring us back a remission of our taxes. I will let you know the event; at present we are all in the dark.

M. de Montmoron has been here for two or three days on business: he has a great deal of wit, and has repeated some of his verses to me: he knows and relishes everything that is good. We read together the *Death of Clorinda*: do not say, my child, you know it by heart, but read it again, and observe how beautifully the combat and baptism are managed: end at *ahi vista*! *ahi conoscenza*[1]! Do not perplex yourself with complaints which would console you, and I will answer for it that you will be satisfied. Madame de Guitaud has great reason to be satisfied with Jou-

[1] *Gerusalemme Liberata,* Canto xii, oct. 67.

bert, for having delivered her so safely. The poor man had a tedious time of it, but these sort of labours must raise his reputation. I do not think her journey was a prudent step; the event proved happy, but would never reconcile me to such a proceeding: I shall always be miserable on these occasions, since what I saw you suffer at Aix. Madame de Béthune[1] acts very differently from her sister, if she goes to Poland to lie-in. Her situation there will be a very pleasant one: yours seems at present a little tiresome to you, for want of hearing *no* sometimes. You are surfeited with continual complaisance. You wish for a Montausier, and I that the person you are questioning at present may not answer you *no*. This marriage appears to me a wonderful thing; that *yes* once more, and then we will wait patiently for the negative oath. Bonzi has very different views; they appear the same to Madame de Coulanges, as they do to me. Negatives are now chiefly made use of in part of payment; at least, they are so in this country, where we hear no answer but *no* from those whom we ask for our money. Adieu, my dearest; I think of you night and day: you teach me what true devotion is.

There is a person called the Chevalier de Sévigné at Toulon, who is a relation of yours, and my god-son, the Chevalier de Buous, tells me he is very brave; if he should call to pay his respects to M. de Grignan, I beg he will treat him with kindness for my sake, and render him any little service in your power. He would be glad to have a ship; as you can do anything with M. de Seignelay, you may easily obtain him one.

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[1] The husband of Madame de Béthune was then Ambassador to Poland, and she was besides the sister of Louise d'Arquien, who married Jean Sobieski, before he was King of Poland.

LETTER 360

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, November 20, 1675.

I have had no letter from you, my dear, which has made me very dull. Du But tells me, it is occasioned by the badness of the weather; which prevents the post from Provence coming in time for your packet to be put up in the Brittany bag. I do not believe a word of this; I am afraid your cold is worse, that you have a fever, and will not suffer anyone else to write to me, for fear of alarming me. This, my dear Comtesse, is the melancholy hue of my thoughts; but I hope Friday will clear up all, and relieve me from the dreadful condition I am in at present from my disappointment, which has had such an effect on me, that I hardly know where I am.

We are in expectation of the return of M. de St.-Malo, and M. de Rohan. Though they are only gone to acquaint His Majesty with the loyalty of our intentions, for I believe that will be all, I am persuaded they will procure some indulgence for us. The States have allowed them two thousand pistoles each for their trouble and expenses; in short, our humour for donations exceeds all the mad houses in the world. But in all this, I pity poor M. d'Harouïs[1] who must certainly be ruined in having such large drafts made on him at a time when a stop is put to all his receipts. I assure you, I am heartily sorry for him.

Madame de Vins has written me another very pretty letter; I am going to answer it: I would show you what I write, if I had only to go from one room to another; but how can I do so at this distance? I expect my son here soon; he will help me to pass my time much more agreeably while I remain here. The *worthy*[2] informs you by

[1] Who was Treasurer of the States of Brittany.

[2] The Abbé de Coulanges.

me, that Rousseau is in Paris, and that you may write to him upon your affairs: when we get there, we shall be all employed hand and heart in serving you. You cannot make too much of d'Hacqueville; you have a great share in the correspondence I carry on with him. The good Cardinal has written to inform me that winter approaches; I tell him I know it, and have desired him not to give himself uneasiness about anything in his desert: it is not good, I tell him, to make himself uneasy in a desert, and that I will take upon me to answer for everything; you find his Eminence has not forgotten us yet. I am amusing myself with felling some large trees; the hurry and bustle of all this does not badly represent a winter-piece in tapestry; on one side, you see trees falling, on the other people sawing the timber; here they are binding the brush-wood into small bundles, there you see others loading a cart with the wood, and I in the midst of them all; so you have the picture complete. But I am going to have some more planted; for what other business have I at *The Rocks*?

I send a note from the Comte de St.-Maurice, in which you will see news of the Duchesse de Mazarin [1]: he says, she is absolutely within six leagues of Paris. Oh what a fool! what a fool! The King, besides the ten thousand crowns he has given to Madame de Fontevrault, has lately presented her with a diamond worth three thousand louis. I am very glad of it. I cannot write to the Coadjutor today; and how will he, punctual as he is in those cases, be able to put up with the delay? Pray do not be angry with him for having sent me your letter, for it was a most excellent one: there is nothing I so much delight in. Is M. de La Garde with you? he is a man for whom I have a real esteem, and who truly deserves it. I want, in reality, to know everything that is going on with you. Adieu, my dear, I will chat longer with you another time.

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[1] Madame de Mazarin, always roving, always flying from her husband, in want of necessaries, settled at last in England, where M. de Saint-Maurice, who was just returned from thence, had seen her.

LETTER 361

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, November 24, 1675.

A little patience would save a great deal of vexation. Time robs us of as much as it gives; you know we have always found it a mere shuffler, placing and displacing, ordering and disordering, imprinting and effacing, bringing together and separating, and in short, rendering all things good and bad, in such a manner that it is hardly possible to know them again. Time shows respect to nothing but our friendship, and that it will always respect. But, my dear child, whither have I got? What a strange digression is this! I was only going to tell you, that the courier came in so late, that your letters were kept back one post, and that the next I had two together; and see what a round-about mode I have taken. Well, no matter! between friends one may be allowed to let the pen take its own course. I am sure mine is very seldom curbed.

They were surprised at M. de Pomponne's, that the Town-House at Aix, which appeared to you like *a den of thieves,* should have behaved so much to your satisfaction. I think it is better it should be so, for the sake of peace. But the question is, whether you would not be more amused by being engaged in war, where you always come off victor: I know at least how you stand with respect to a general peace. I shall not write anything to Paris concerning your warlike humour, lest M. de Pomponne, who is *amico di pace e di riposo,* should be angry with you. D'Hacqueville assures me that we cannot wish to be better than we are with that family; if you are pleased with it, write to M. de Pomponne, and Madame de Vins; when we intend to give pleasure to a person, we always like to know how we have succeeded.

Little Marsan has committed the same fault in his

way, that M. de Lauzun did, that is, delayed and talked too much of his marriage. Madame the Maréchale d'Aumont had given him five hundred thousand crowns; but M. Le Tellier does not wish it, and the King has forbidden it, to take place. I am told, however, that the Maréchale spoke very well to the King, and that M. de Marsan said to him: "Sire, as I found that my services deserved no recompense from you, I endeavoured to place myself in a position where I might become useful to you in future, without troubling you with my wretched fortune."

The other day the Queen missed going to mass, and lost twenty thousand crowns in one morning. The King said to her, "Let us calculate, Madame, how much this is a year." And M. de Montausier asked her the next day, if she intended staying away from mass for the *hoca* again; upon which she went into a great passion. I have heard these stories from persons who come from Versailles, and who collect them on purpose for me. I am quite in the dark respecting the mysterious present made by *Quantova* to M. de Marsillac. I like your parody extremely, it is both humorous and just. I sing it admirably, but no one hears me; do you not think there is madness or folly in singing by one's self in a wood? I am perfectly persuaded of the Bishop's [1] vow in the battle; *e fece voto, e fu liberato* [2]; but mark the end, *passato il pericolo, schernito il santo* [3]. I fancy he is very much disturbed about the colour of his hat: thank God he will not have ours [4], it is too well fixed on a much worthier head. M. de Cossé hates the Pope, and I love him.

You are very humorous upon our misfortunes; but we have no more breakings on the wheel now, except one in a week or ten days, just to keep the executioner's hand

[1] Of Marseilles, who was then Ambassador to the King of Poland, whose dominions were invaded by the Turks.

[2] He made a vow, and was liberated. [Translation.]

[3] The danger past, he threw aside the saint. [Translation.]

[4] Meaning that of the Cardinal de Retz, for which the Bishop of Marseilles and his friends had made great interest, when his Eminence had written to the Pope for leave to resign it.

in: in short, hanging seems to be a kind of deliverance here from greater miseries. I have a very different idea of justice and punishment, since my being here, from what I had before; and I look upon your galley-slaves as a set of happy people, who have retired from the world to lead a life of ease and tranquillity: we have sent you a few hundreds from hence, but those who are left behind are much more wretched. I told you, I was afraid they would put down our States, by way of punishment again; but they are assembled, and have made a gift of three millions, as if it was nothing; we are above thinking of the trifling circumstances of not being able to raise it; that is beneath our consideration. You ask me if we are really ruined; yes, and no: if we did not wish to leave the place, we might live here for nothing, for we can dispose of nothing, and we can buy nothing; but, as for money, there is none to be found in the Province.

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*LETTER 362

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, November 27, 1675.

I must accustom myself to this, my dear child; I receive both your packets at once: the season has deranged one of our post-days, which is the greatest evil it could occasion me, for I laugh at its cold, snow, ice, and other inconveniences. M. de Coulanges is in Paris; I have received a long and very pleasant letter from him: he will also write to you; he seems to have some excellent pens, and only wants to exercise them. We said to each other, "Where is my son? It is long since he left the army, where can he be?" For my part, I am not uneasy about him, and I am certain he is singing vespers with his pretty Abbess; you know he always makes it in his way to call upon her. I send you the third little volume of the *Moral Es-*

says I mentioned to you: read it, my child, without offence to Josephus, which I wish you to finish, and tell me if you do not think this little book equal to the first that you so much admired. Mademoiselle de Méri is returned from La Trousse; I am glad of it upon your account: she is very much embarrassed about a house: this is a little like talking of ships and boats, but you know it is my way.

Be not uneasy lest I should inform them in Paris, of what you say respecting your affairs in Provence: knowing that the least jest would displease M. de Pomponne, I am very cautious of writing a single word upon the subject, either to him or d'Hacqueville, whose sentiments are the same as his. Your Consul will be elected on Saturday, St. Andrew's day. I remember this festival, and cannot help admiring how well you have succeeded in effecting what you wished, in conjunction with those who seem to be the patrons; it is because you are so much beloved: we are astonished that a Governor can be loved anywhere. Our Deputies who ran so foolishly to carry the news of the gift, have had the satisfaction to know that our present has been well received; and are returned, contrary to the hope of the whole Province, without bringing back any favour. I am overwhelmed with letters from the States, everyone is eager to write to me: this cross correspondence annoys me not a little. An attempt is being made to reform the donations and pensions, and to return to the old regulations, which would diminish them at least half; but I would bet that nothing will come of it, and as it falls upon our friends the Governors, Lieutenants-General, Commissaries of the King, first Presidents, and others, they will neither have the courage nor the generosity to retrench anything.

Madame de Quintin is at Dinan: her style is as inflated as her person: those who are destined to make harangues, copy their fine periods from her; a country-woman of quality who thinks she has all the airs of a Court, is a dangerous being. There is a little Madame de N*** here who has not the same address; she is young and hand-

some, of the family of M***, and was not changed at nurse. This is precisely what is called Brittany news.

We are busied in finishing a foolish affair with a President, in order to receive the residue of our rent: it is this that detains us at present.

The marriage of the pretty Prince (de Marsan) is not quite broken off; but it is said that the treasures that were spoken of, will be reduced to a hundred thousand crowns: ah! I would not sleep with that witch [1] for the whole of this sum. I am persuaded, my child, you will pass the month of December at Grignan: you always shorten your stay at Aix as much as you can. You laugh at the Durance, and I am not yet recovered from my surprise at its fury and violence. I shall never forget the Chartreux de Bompas, *bon repas*; for, do you remember the entertainment they gave us? Ah! my child, I was then with you; this recollection is dear to me; I spare you all my thoughts and feelings upon the subject: your disposition and courage do not accommodate themselves to all that supports me. I amuse myself in the evenings with reading the history of the imprisonment and liberation of the Prince: the Cardinal is frequently mentioned in it. I seem to be only eighteen years of age: for I remember the circumstances perfectly; this makes it still more amusing. The importance of the characters pleases me more than the style: it is the only book I read of an evening. Adieu, my dearest child: you are my best love, and delight me more than the whole world; one finger is enough for calculations of this sort.

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[1] Madame la Maréchale d'Aumont.

*LETTER 363

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to the Comte* DE BUSSY.

The Rocks, November 30, 1675.

I send you, my dear cousin, the letter of attorney you did me the honour to ask me for on the marriage of my niece. No one can approve it more highly than I do, and so I informed you a week or ten days ago. I have even received a letter from the lover, who, from an excess of politeness, has written to ask my approbation. His letter is plain, simple, well and handsomely expressed, without being destroyed, as the play says, by a convulsion of compliments. In short, from this specimen, I can easily see that he is a man of good sense, and good principle. To these I add his admiration of you, which can only proceed from merit in himself; and his noble birth, of which the Cardinal has told me: I conclude that my niece is very happy, in the prospect of being so well established. You understand me, my dear niece; I already begin by putting you one after the other, for I wish to please him: and I do not mean, loving you as I do, to disoblige you. Tell me, my good cousin, all the particulars of this gay entertainment. Our Province is ruined. M. de Chaulnes has removed the Parliament from Rennes, to punish the city for its conduct: it is now at Vannes, a little town, where they will be very much incommoded.

The rebels of Rennes have made their escape for a long time; thus the innocent suffer for the guilty: but I shall not complain, provided the four thousand soldiers who are quartered at Rennes, do not prevent me from walking in my woods, which are of a wonderful height and beauty. Adieu, Comte: since we love one another still, there is little doubt that we shall love one another to the end of our lives.

LETTER 364

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, December 1, 1675.

Well, my dear, it seems now settled that I am to receive two of your packets together, and miss one post; you should see the faces I make, and how I receive it in comparison with those that come regularly. I am of your opinion, my child, and would give a great deal to be as easy about answering letters as the Coadjutor is, and keep them in my pocket for a month or two without troubling my head about them. Well, it is a gift from heaven certainly, this happy indifference! Madame de Langeron used to say of visits, and I apply it to everything; "What I do fatigues me, and what I omit to do vexes me." I think this is very well said, and I feel it sensibly. I am always exact, however, in my answers; it is with pleasure I give you the top of the basket; that is, you have the very flower of my mind, my head, my eyes, my pen, my desk; the rest fare as they can. I have as much amusement in chatting with you, as labour and fatigue in writing to others. I am perfectly stunned with the great news that abounds in Europe.

I suppose the Coadjutor has shown Madame de Fontevrault the letter he received from you: you are ignorant of its value: you write like an angel; I read your letters with admiration: you no sooner set out than you reach the goal. Do you remember the minuet which you danced so well, and closed in such excellent time, when the other creatures were not at the end of theirs till the next day? The late MADAME and yourself were famous for this; we used to call it *gaining ground.* Your letters are just the same.

As for your poor little *frater,* I know not where he has hidden himself: it is three weeks now since I had a

line from him. He made no mention of the pretty airing upon the Meuse, though everybody believes it here; his fortune is really very hard, poor lad. I do not see how we can manage the affair of his promotion, unless Lauzun will take the guidonage in part of payment, with some other little additions, we will endeavour to raise: but to buy the ensign's place, and have the guidonage left upon our hands, will never do. Your reasoning upon the matter is very just; we all acquiesce in it, and shall be very well contented to mount after the other two [1], provided the guidon serves as the first step.

I shall finish the year here very peaceably. There are times when all places are indifferent, and a solitude like this not unpleasant. Madame de La Fayette returns you all your civilities: she has very bad health, and poor M. de Limoges still worse; he has resigned all his benefices to the King: I fancy his son, the Abbé de La Fayette, will have one of his Abbeys. Poor Gascony has been as roughly handled as we have been. We have six thousand troops sent down to pass the winter amongst us: if it were not for the misconduct of the Provinces, I do not know how they would be able to dispose of their troops. I cannot think peace is so near: do you remember all our reasoning upon the subject of war, and how many persons there must be killed? This is always a certain prophecy, and so is that, that your letters can never tire me, long as they may be: ah! you will find no chimera in this hope, they are my choicest reading. Ripert brings you a third volume of the *Moral Essays,* which are worth your perusal. I never met with greater energy than there is in the style of these writers: they make use of no words but what are in common use, and yet they appear perfectly new, by the elegant manner in which they use them. In the morning, I read the *History of France*; in the afternoon, some serious subjects in my woods; such as *Es-*

[1] The Marquis de La Trousse, and the Marquis de La Fare; the one Captain-Lieutenant, and the other Sub-Lieutenant, in the Dauphin's Gens-d'armes.

says, the *Life of Saint Thomas of Canterbury*, which I think delightful, or the *Iconoclastes*; and in the evening, things of a lighter nature: this is my constant rule. I hope you continue to read Josephus; take courage, my dear, and go on boldly to the end. If you read the *History of the Crusades*, you will meet with two illustrious men who were your ancestors, but not a word about the great family of V***, that holds its head so high at present: but I am persuaded there are some passages which will make you throw aside the book, and curse the Jesuit [1]; and yet upon the whole it is an admirable history.

The good La Troche does her duty very well, for I look upon whatever is done for you as no obligation: the Princesse and I were rummaging over some old papers of the late Madame de La Trémouille's, where we found a thousand copies of verses, and portraits, among others, that which Madame de La Fayette drew of me, under the name of *Incognito*: it is by far too flattering a likeness, notwithstanding some of my friends who knew me about sixteen years ago, out of their love for me, contend that it is a strong resemblance. What answer, what return can I make, my dear child, to the tenderness you express for me; unless that I devote myself entirely to you, and esteem your love as the dearest thing to me on earth!

LETTER 365

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, December 4, 1675.

I write to-day upon the point of a needle; for I now receive no letters from you but on a Friday, and then I have two at once. As I was returning from my walk yesterday, I met the poor *frater* [2], at the end of the mall,

[1] Father Maimbourg, author of the *History of the Crusades*. The physician, in the *Lettres Persanes*, gives as a receipt for the asthma, to read all the works of this Father, stopping only at each period.

[2] M. de Sévigné.

who immediately fell upon his knees, so conscious of having done wrong in having been three weeks under ground, singing matins, that he thought he dared not approach me otherwise. I had resolved to scold him heartily, but I was so glad to see him, that I could not find an angry word to use. You know how entertaining he is; he embraced me a thousand times, and gave me the worst reasons in the world; which, however, I received as sterling: we chat, we read, we walk, and we wear away the year; or rather, what is left of it. We are determined to dispose of our paltry guidonage as well as we can, if the King will permit. Chevalier de Lauzun may find a purchaser for his place, and we will endeavour to do the same for ours, and then we may perhaps agree together afterwards.

We are in doleful dumps about the troops that are pouring in upon us on all sides, under M. de Pommereuil. This has been a severe stroke for our officers: they are mortified in their turn, especially the Governor, who did not expect such an answer for the present of the three millions. M. de St.-Malo has returned; he met with a very indifferent reception at the States: they complain that he has made a bad bargain at St.-Germain; he ought, at least, to have remained at Court, to see what he could do towards an abatement of these hardships. M. de Rohan is engaged, and not yet come back, nor perhaps does he intend it. M. de Coulanges writes me word that he has seen the Chevalier de Grignan, who is very dissatisfied at my absence; I am more vexed than I have ever been at not being in Paris, that I might have the pleasure of seeing and chatting with him. But do you know, my dear, that his regiment is one of those that are to be sent into this Province? It would be an odd circumstance if we should see the Chevalier here: I should receive him with great joy. I suppose you will not want for news from Paris, now the Chevalier is there. M. de Coulanges is greatly disgusted. M. Le Tellier, it seems, has opened his purse strings, and purchased for Bagnols the post of Master of the Requests, and at the same time given him another place which he had

promised to M. de Coulanges, and which is worth, without stirring out of Paris, more than two thousand livres a year: this is a sensible mortification for Coulanges; and if Madame de Coulanges cannot bring her uncle to another way of thinking, in a conference she is shortly to have with him on the subject, Coulanges is resolved to dispose of his post immediately: he has written to me about it, and seems very much nettled. You well know the hopes that are entertained of peace: the newspapers cannot fail to inform you of this, nor of the lamentations of our unfortunate Province. The Cardinal writes me word that he has seen the Comte de Sault, Renti, and Biran: he is so much afraid of being the object of public curiosity, that he is gone to spend the advent at Saint-Mihel. Talk to me of yourself, my dearest child; how are you? is your complexion injured? are you handsome when you please? I am for ever thinking of you, and you cannot oblige me more than by telling me everything that relates to you. But I resign my pen to the honest lad at my elbow, and embrace you with all my heart.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*

(Enclosed in his Mother's letter.)

What does the good lady mean by her "honest lad?" I am treated as if I were not fit to throw to the dogs, because I was a fortnight traversing a hundred and fifty leagues of ground; and if I did stop a little by the way, pray where is the great harm of it? But I am scolded, and stormed at, because they cannot enjoy enough of my delightful company; this is the misfortune of being too charming! Ah, my dear father, why did you make me so handsome?

I have received your kind letter, and the steady and tender affection you have always shown me, makes me easily believe that you take as much interest in my affairs as you say you do: my mother has informed you exactly how they stand. You may suppose I shall hardly pur-

chase M. de Lauzun's post, nor run into ruin for the sake of two subaltern positions. This is the extremity to which I am reduced by not taking your advice, in preference to any other; but I really think the crime may very well be expiated by seven years of purgatory, six of which I have already passed under M. de La Trousse, and that it does not merit an eternity of torments, like that which threatens me, unless I am speedily delivered by Providence: however, for this once, I will follow the advice of the wise heads who govern us. I have heard of all your triumphs in Provence, and it is impossible to say how sensibly they affected me. I embrace you most sincerely and tenderly, my dear little sister. Consider how you have always behaved towards me: consider how much you have always preferred my interest to your own: consider how amiable and excellent you appear in the eyes of everyone; and then judge of my sentiments towards you.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *continues and concludes her letter to her Daughter.*

My dear child, Bourdelot has sent me some verses he has made in praise of the Prince and the Duc; he sends them to you also [1]. He has written that he is no poet, and I am almost tempted to ask him, "Why then do you write verses? who obliges you to it?" He calls me the mother of Love, but it is to no purpose. I think his verses very poor. I know not whether praise makes my heart ache, as it will the Prince's. Madame de Villars embraces and

[1] The Abbé Bourdelot, physician to the great Condé, pleased him infinitely by his gaiety, and even by his familiarity. Queen Christine liked him extremely. She took it into her head to learn to swear, wishing, she said, to know everything. She selected Bourdelot for her instructor. I know none of his verses, but those he made upon the Duc, who had sent him some game. "Bourdelot," says he, "is a second Orpheus:

Il a déjà tiré des ames des enfers,
Et déjà le gibier vient au son de sa lyre.

"He has already drawn souls from the infernal regions, and game comes already to the sound of his lyre." [Translation.]

loves you: what think you of this journey? I trust to you to say a word for me to the mournful traveller. I embrace the poor little Dague. The good Abbé is devoted to you, and am I not also, my beloved child, devoted to you?

LETTER 366

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, December 8, 1675.

I expected two of your packets by to-day's post, and I have received none. As gloomy thoughts are apt to hover over these woods, I was at first inclined to be uneasy about you: but the good Abbé and my son assure me, that if any accident had happened to you, you would have ordered some person to write to me, and I choose therefore, to lay all the blame on the post, though I do not comprehend how it can be so irregular, and to hope I shall hear from you to-morrow.

D'Hacqueville has a cold and a little fever; I am anxious about him, for I always tremble at fevers; they say it abates, but it is life itself which abates by being undermined. Though the name of d'Hacqueville is become proverbial, there is not one of the whole race who is worthy to be compared to our good friend. Has he mentioned to you a journey the King is to take either to Champagne or Picardy? for a report of this kind has begun to spread to our sorrow. They say it is to be for three months. You see I make the most of the loose sheet, which is called News. As for his letter, it is so full of my son, and my daughter, and our affairs in Brittany, that I should be unnatural if I did not put out my eyes in deciphering it. M. de Lavardin is my resident at the States; he informs me of everything. As we sometimes fill up our letters with a sentence of Italian, I sent him these lines of Tasso, addressed by the shepherd to *Erminia*,

to make him understand the repose and indolence I enjoy here:—

> . . . . . D'ogni oltraggio e scorno,
> La mia famiglia, e la mia greggia illese
> Sempre quì fur, nè strepito di Marte
> Ancor turbò questa remota parte [1].

My letter was scarcely sent away, when eight hundred dragoons arrived at Vitré, whom the Princesse was very little pleased with. It is true, they are upon their march; but, upon my word, they live as if it were in a conquered country, notwithstanding our good marriage with Charles VIII. and with Louis XII [2].

The Deputies have only just returned from Paris. M. de St.-Malo, Guémadeuc, who is your relation, and a mitred linnet, as Madame de Choisy told me, appeared at the States perfectly transported, and full of the goodness of the King to him, without paying the least regard to the ruin of the Province, which was the agreeable present he brought with him. His manner of addressing the Province, could not but be very pleasing to a people who were in despair at the situation of their affairs. He said, that His Majesty was very well satisfied with his good Province of Brittany, and with the present they had made him; that he had forgotten the past; and had sent his troops amongst them, only as a mark of his confidence in them, as we send our equipage home when we have no further use for it. M. de Rohan conducted himself very differently, and with more appearance of a good patriot.

This is the scurvy news we have to send you; I wish to know what you have to send us in return, and what is become of your *procureur du pays*. You need not doubt but the Jansons have made great complaints to M. de

[1] . . . . . No dangers here, my son,
As yet my kindred or my flock have known;
And these abodes, removed to distance far,
Have ne'er been startled with the din of war.
Jerusalem Delivered, Canto 7.

[2] The marriage of Anne, Duchess of Brittany with Charles VIII., and after his death, with Louis XII., united this Province to France.

Pomponne; I suppose you have not forgotten to write to him yourself, and likewise to Madame de Vins, who undertook to write for St. Andiol. It is d'Hacqueville only who can serve you, and inform you of what concerns your affairs there. I am wholly useless to you *in questa remota parte*[1]. It is one of my greatest sorrows; if ever I find myself again in a situation to be serviceable to you, you shall see how I will redeem the time that has been lost. Adieu, my dear; I wish you perfect health; it is the only thing that can preserve mine, about which you are so solicitous; it is in a very good state at present. I embrace you tenderly; and would tell you how agreeable and amusing my son is: but here he comes; I must not indulge his indolence, let him answer for himself.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*

(*Enclosed in his Mother's letter.*)

I should have nothing to entertain you with, my dear sister, after what I wrote to you three days ago, if I had not spent the afternoon with Mademoiselle du Plessis, who is still the same charming creature. This illustrious beauty, who is to be the subject of my letter, has something so furiously agreeable, that she can only be equalled by the amiable Tisiphone. Her lip is covered with a kind of fretwork, resembling a leprosy; and her bright eyes have something in them so insupportable, that we wish for the defence of an umbrella even in the shade. All her concern at present is, that this malady on her lip prevents her from kissing my mother every quarter of an hour. She has had something of the same kind upon her arm, which has kept her at home a long time: and I unluckily took the liberty to say, that *The Rocks* were not the less agreeable for her absence. At present, we are in hopes that she will have a tertian ague: she has been complaining of it to-day, and she renews her complaints every moment to excite our compassion. She has displayed all her eloquence in bewailing the dismal prospect of passing the whole winter, with a

[1] In this distant retreat. [Translation.]

day of sickness for every two days of health. On our part, we expect to be attacked by a double tertian; and foresee, to our sorrow, that by means of her company, we are likely to have two bad days for the one agreeable day on which she is confined. In other respects, *The Rocks* is extremely agreeable. My mother continues to signalise her goodness towards this favourite place, by still adding new beauties to it. Our good Abbé has spent the afternoon in drawing plans, which may remain as monuments of his taste, and of my mother's magnificence: the Chapel is finished, and mass will be said in it in a week. May God long preserve to us, my dear sister, so good a mother, and so good an uncle. I say nothing of my little post in the army: everything goes so very ill, that I conceive new hopes from my disappointments.

LETTER 367

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, December 11, 1675.

A little patience, my dear child, brings us to the accomplishment of our wishes: I have received the two packets of letters from you that I should have received before; but they are come at last, and you will do me no more than justice to believe that I am highly delighted to have them. I thank you, that notwithstanding all your philosophy, you enter into my melancholy reflections on the immense distance that separates us; you sympathise with me; you seem afflicted, as well as myself, with this disposition of Providence; but you encounter it with more courage than I do, who always feel from it some new increase of sorrow. I am continually meditating on the past, for which the present and the future can never make me amends. It is an ample field in which to exercise a heart so tender and ill-defended as mine. I cannot but admire those good ladies who make a duty of their inclination; there is La Troche for instance, who has so well turned

and wound her good fortune, that she is at length settled at her ease in the good city of Paris, making it the seat of her Empire, and the field of all her operations. She has fixed her son at Court, in spite of wind and tide, and makes it her business to be always near him. As for Marbeuf, she had begun, even in her husband's time, and now lays no restraint upon herself; she has taken a lease of a house in Paris, for a hundred years, and most humbly takes her leave of poor Brittany: whilst you, my dear child, who were born and bred in this country, you whom I have always so fondly loved, and so ardently wished to have for ever with me, are driven to the farthest end of the world, by the storms of adverse fortune; but, if I mean to put an end to my letter, I must pass lightly over these reflections, and resume my courage in the flattering hope of a change: d'Hacqueville and I indulge some pleasing dreams of that kind; but this is not a time to communicate them to you. Let us return to the miseries of this poor Province.

Every place is full of warriors; there are to be some at Vitré, notwithstanding the Princesse is there. MONSIEUR, when he writes to her, styles her his good aunt; his dear aunt; but I do not find that she is better treated than others. There are to be troops at Guerche, the estate of the Marquis de Villeroi; and from thence they are to spread themselves among the country people, to rob and strip them. This is a heavy disaster upon poor Brittany, that never experienced anything of the kind before. Our Governor has received a power to grant a general amnesty, which he disperses with one hand, and with the other lets loose eight thousand soldiers, over whom he has as much command as you have: they have all their orders. M. de Pommereuil is expected here every day; he has the inspection of this little army, and may very soon boast a fine government. He is the best and wisest of the robe: he is my friend; but I doubt whether he will be as tractable as your Controller, whom you manage so excellently; I am afraid he will be changed. I can give you no information to-day respecting Languedoc; in the mean time content

yourself with some from Guyenne: I find they are well protected, and have procured a considerable mitigation of their burden. Alas! we are not so happy; our protections, if we had any, would do us more harm than good, by the animosity against us of two individuals. I believe we may still find, or at least promise to find, the three millions demanded of us, without ruining our friend[1]; for he is so beloved by the States, that they would do anything rather than he should suffer. And this, I think, is enough upon the subject.

I am rejoiced that you are not returned to Grignan; it would have been only an additional fatigue and expense to you. Prudence and economy, for which the good Abbé desires me to thank you, have rendered that step unnecessary. Let me know if the dear little ones are to come to you. We have most delightful weather here, and we are making some new walks, which will be very beautiful. My son is very good, and helps to amuse us; he enters into the spirit of the place, and has brought no more of the warrior or of the courtier with him into this retreat, than is sufficient to enliven conversation. When it does not rain, we are not to be pitied, as at a distance it may be supposed: the time we have fixed to spend here will pass like the rest.

My letter has not been given to Louvois; the whole affair is negotiating between Lauzun and myself; if he will take the guidonage, we have offered to make a small addition to it; if he resolves to sell his post outright, which would be very unreasonable, he must look for a purchaser on his side, as we shall on ours; that is all. I have written to the Chevalier to condole with him on our not having met in Paris: we should have made curious lamentations together on our last year's party, and should have renewed our tears for the loss of M. de Turenne. I know not what idea you have of our Princesse: I assure you she is no Artemisia[2]; her heart is like wax, it easily takes impression:

[1] M. de Harouïs.

[2] The affectionate and chaste wife of Mausolus, King of Caria, whose ashes she drank after his death.

she makes a boast of it, and says pleasantly enough that she has a ridiculous heart; this is spoken in general terms, but the world is rather more particular in its applications. I am in hopes I shall be able to keep this folly within bounds, by the frequent speeches I make (as if I intended nothing by them) on the detestable light in which those women are held, who give too great a rein to their passions, and how much they subject themselves thereby to contempt. I talk miraculously sometimes; I am heard, and approved, as much as can be expected. Indeed I consider it quite a duty to talk thus: and should think it an honour to be instrumental in working a reformation.

What you say respecting Fidèle[1], is extremely pretty and diverting. I must own my behaviour has been that of a coquette, and I am heartily ashamed of it. I endeavoured to justify myself in the way I told you; for it is certain I aspired to the supreme merit of loving only one dog, in contradiction of M. de La Rochefoucauld's *Maxim*, "That it is more rare to find a woman who has had but one lover, than to find a woman who has had none at all;" but I am really embarrassed about Marphise; I do not know how to manage, nor what I shall say to her: this leads to lying; but, at all events, I will relate the circumstances of my new engagement: in short, it is an embarrassment to which I had resolved never to subject myself; and is a striking example of human imbecility: this accident would not have happened to me, if I had not been so near Vitré.

I am tired to death with the barrenness of news; we stand in great need of some event, as you say, let it be at whose expense it will; as long as we have no more Turennes to lose, *vogue la galère*[2]. You tell me extraordinary things; I read them, admire them, believe them, and then you send me word they are not true: I well know the style and braggart of the Provinces. You judge superficially

[1] The little dog mentioned in Letter 358, of 13th November, 1675, in this volume.

[2] Happy go lucky, let the world go as it will. [Translation.]

of our Governor, when you say you should have acted as he did, had you been in his place: I know you would not; neither did the King's service require it. Ah! what is become of the excellent understanding you had last winter? This is no time to think of deputations: let us see peace restored, and then we shall have time to think of everything.

As to the religion of the Jews, I said, when reading their history, that "if God had given me grace to have been born a Jew[1]," I should have liked it better than any other except the true religion. I admire its magnificence; but you must admire it still more, on account of its year of rest, and of dressing-gowns, which would have given you an opportunity of being a shining example of piety in your elbow-chair; never would sabbath have been better kept. Ripert has received the *Moral Essays*; they contain several treatises, and amongst the rest one that is particularly pleasing: you will guess which I mean. I am delighted with your good health and beauty, for I love you truly. I often wish for you in these woods, the air of which, as well as that of Livry, is a great preservative to the complexion. Our good Abbé praises you highly for your care in discharging your debts; for that, in his estimation, is the law and the prophets; and as M. de Grignan is so prudent, I will embrace him notwithstanding his beard; but do you know that your little brother's beard has the presumption to rival it? it is to much purpose? Send me word of your success at play. It seems to me as if I saw your little fingers taking out of the pool; but these times are past: good and evil travel on the same road, but they leave different impressions. You have given a great dinner: where was I? for I know all; I see all the magnificence from hence. You express yourself admirably on the marriage of the little Prince (de Marsan) and the Maréchale; the disproportion is doubtless great, but sup-

[1] In allusion to an expression of M. de La Rochefoucauld, who said, "If God had given me grace to have been born a Turk, I should have died a Turk."

pose he should have escaped it! Believe me, you have no need of my letters, you can write delightfully without a theme. But I must reduce myself at last to Solon's rule, "Nothing is to be praised on this side the grave:" which is a heavy restriction for me, who dearly love to praise what is praise-worthy; besides, who can stay so long? For my part, I shall always go on in my old way: adieu, my ever-lovely and beloved child.

LETTER 368

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, December 15, 1675.

Ah! my child, how much I have just been walking in *my daughter's whim*! *my mother's whim* is thought no more of in this country. I come from my woods: the walks in them are beautiful, and I should never be tired of them. There are six new ones you have never seen, and those you have seen are very much improved. The mall is more beautiful than the rest, and, besides, it is *my daughter's whim*. It is now mild and dry. I remained till after dusk, because no troops have passed to-day: when any come to Vitré, they oblige me, against my inclination, to retire an hour earlier. It is there, my child, I have leisure to love you: I can easily comprehend that you have not always time to do this; we must enjoy it when we can. You were engaged in a thousand things which prevented you from finding your affection at a given time; but it is true, that in three days you repaired this distraction sufficiently: you seem to have acquitted yourself wonderfully of your promise to love me again; you are now at leisure to do so, and I am sure you love me very much.

I am delighted that Roquesante is with you; he is, without disparagement to the rest, the most gentlemanly man in Provence, and one whose heart and mind are the

best suited to yours: you have very much obliged me by giving my compliments to him without waiting three weeks: some things may be easily answered. Remember me also to your worthy Cardinal (Grimaldi): God preserve him to you for a hundred years to come: I fancy he was one of those who contributed to fix the hat upon the head of our Cardinal.

You astonish me by saying that my letters are good: I am delighted that they please you, you know my feelings upon that subject. I say nothing to you of yours, lest I should give you the fat Abbé's pain in the calf of the leg; otherwise, I know what I could say, but I will show you a few of them, some day, and you shall judge yourself. You are right when you suppose, I wish for nothing so much as to have an opportunity of being reconciled to Fontainebleau, but I cannot yet get rid of the remembrance of what it made me suffer. You have seen the Abbé de La Vergne then, it seems, and have got the *Moral Essays*; those I sent you, arrived almost as expeditiously as our letters. The treatise *On tempting God,* appeared to be the most useful; that *On the resemblance of self-love and charity,* the most luminous, to use their own expression. But let me have your opinion of them.

You have judged very rightly what it is that causes my indifference respecting our return to Paris; it is such, that were it not for the affairs which call us thither, I should see no reason to prefer one day to another for leaving this agreeable desert: but many reasons make us resolve to take our measures so, that we may just arrive in Paris at the beginning of Lent, which is the best time for pleading; and I am a little like the Comtesse de Pimbèche; I hope every thing will go well.

Since you desire to know how the affair I have with Meneuf goes on, I must inform you, that he is in despair at our serving upon him a certain instrument of justice, which leaves him no farther pretext for delaying the payment. He had counted upon an escape as to five or six thousand francs, which is prevented by a paper we

have found. I am obliged to the Abbé for this discovery, for Vaillant had the paper in his hands, but did not know the virtue of it: but it is written in the Book of Fate, that I shall be under all sorts of obligations to him. I may now expect the termination of this affair. It is a pleasure to see the convulsions of dishonesty, which is at a loss for a stratagem, and can find no new pretext by which to defend itself.

I cannot imagine what Berbisy means; he tells me positively that he has sent you the *moyeux*[1]; I will write to him again about it; I love to see with what expedition M. de Grignan devours them. In the mean time I embrace him, even though it should be the third day of his thorny beard: it is, I think, impossible to expose one's person to danger with a better grace. I had resolved to treat the Chevalier in the same manner; but I am afraid we shall only have his regiment here. I designed to have told you, that if I could get him hither, I should devour him with caresses; but you have prevented me by telling me so: I own you have not guessed amiss in supposing, that I should be extremely pleased to see him. If we can escape the heavy rains of the season, I am sure he would not spend his time here disagreeably.

Tell me, my dear, of your success at play, and of your health. I was not long in pain about your cold; it was not the post immediately after I heard of it, that failed. I have since received four packets in a week, two at a time; not one of your letters has been lost; as for the irregularity of the post, we must make up our minds to it. Do not let it be known in Paris that I shall not return so soon: not that I fear anyone there would hang himself, if he knew of my delay; but because I would not give Mirepoix the pleasure of knowing it.

Adieu, my dear; you cannot deceive yourself in believing that I love you with my whole heart. Your brother is coming, who will give you an account how I spend the fast-days, and that mass was celebrated to-day for the first

[1] A kind of dried fruit.

time in our Chapel; for though it has been built four years, it wanted all the ornaments necessary to make it fit to be used. Our Abbé loves you, and conjures you to employ yourself continually in counting, calculating, and computing, for that should be your principal care. What signifies having money, if we cannot tell what is due to us? Your farmers do their duty much better than ours: you pay off your arrears better than any person of the Court; this is a great honour and credit to you. I am out of patience at hearing nothing more of the marriage of your maid. Madame d'Ormesson is marrying her son to a young widow; I will let you know when it will be proper for you to congratulate him.

Our States are broken up: we are short of the money we are to raise by nine hundred thousand francs: this gives me uneasiness on account of M. d'Harouïs. They have retrenched half the pensions and gratifications. M. de Rohan did not dare, considering the dejected state of the Province, to promote amusement of any kind; but that old mitred linnet of sixty, M. de Saint-Malo, thought it becoming of him to begin; not, as you may perhaps expect, by appointing some solemn procession, or the prayers of forty hours, but by giving the ladies a ball and supper. It was a public disgrace: M. de Rohan, though he was ashamed of it, was forced to continue it. Thus, like the dying swan, we sing over our own ruin. My son will tell you where he found this simile: I believe it was at the end of *Quintus Curtius.*

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*

(*Enclosed in his Mother's letter.*)

My aunt de Biais taught me this erudition, but she did not teach me to do what I did yesterday, of which I am going to give you an account. You know, or at least you may suppose, that I spend all my time at *The Rocks*; and am consequently unacquainted with the adventures that happen in this country. A numerous assembly of the clergy came to assist at the ceremony of opening our

Chapel; M. du Plessis was amongst them. I thought it proper to turn the conversation on something that concerned gentlemen of their profession; and I began with inquiring what was become of M. de Villebrune. They told me, he was fled for refuge to Lower Brittany, and that he had lost his benefice. I replied, that I always thought he would not keep it long, and that there would be found some cunning sharper, who would get it from him. I went on to enlarge upon the knavery of Villebrune, and assured the company that the Capuchins had given me a strange character of him, and that indeed his life made all they said of him but too credible; for a brother, who had profanely thrown off his Capuchin's frock, must certainly be a man of very indifferent principles. This fine speech had two very good effects. The first was, that the Abbé du Plessis is the cunning sharper, who by base ingratitude made poor Villebrune lose his benefice: and the second, that the rector of Bréal, who performed the ceremony, had been himself a Capuchin; so that my words were a two-edged sword to those two reverend gentlemen, like that mentioned in the Apocalypse, which when I read, I did not suppose it would have produced this effect in me. Another piece of erudition. Last Friday was the first fish-day I have spent here; and I asked my mother Thursday evening what she did on Fridays. "My dear," said she, "I eat a slice of bread and butter, and I sing." Whatever there is of good or bad in this, it is literally true.

My mother advises you to write a few lines to Madame de La Fayette, upon the Abbey the King has lately given her; she went to thank him for it last Wednesday: His Majesty received her very graciously: and Madame de La Fayette embraced his knees with the same tenderness that made him shed tears before, for the danger the Duc would encounter in five or six months. She saw Madame de Montespan; M. du Maine conversed with her, and this train of prosperity has brought a letter of two pages to my mother: this is a little in the *Ravaillac* style. Adieu, my dear little sister, continue to love me, and obtain for

me the same favour from M. de Grignan. Tell him that I love and honour him; and that, finding myself incapable of imitating him in his excellent qualities, I endeavour at least to make my beard resemble his, as far as is in my power; and that I should think myself too happy, if I could give it that glossy colour, which a raven might envy, and which makes him appear in your eyes and mine a perfect Adonis.

The *divine* La Plessis is still indisposed. This is the day on which we are to expect our fit; pity us, for her visit, which is worse than that of the ague, is likely to be long, and may perhaps begin at ten in the morning. We have lately had in her place a very pretty damsel, whose eyes do not at all resemble hers. By her means we have set on foot the game of *reversi* [1], and instead of *biguer* [2], we pronounce it *bigler*. I hope the pleasure of repeating this simple term in presence of La Plessis, who is so much a critic, and so impatient of any impropriety of expression, will be no unpleasant revenge on her for her impertinence. She salutes you with her ruby lips. To show you the age and capacity of the little lass we have with us, I must tell you, that she assured us the other day, that the day after Easter-eve was on a Tuesday. Observing us smile, she corrected herself, and said it was on a Monday; and finding this did not succeed, she cried out," Oh! what a simpleton am I! it is on a Friday." You see what doubts and perplexities we labour under; if you will have the goodness to tell us on what day it really is, you will extricate us from a very great difficulty.

If you find any confusion in the date of this letter, it is because my mother wrote her part of it yesterday evening after she came in from her mall, and I write mine this morning, before I go out to hunt squirrels there.

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[1] A game so called.

[2] A term in the game.

LETTER 369

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, December 18, 1675.

I have just been writing to M. de Pomponne, and Madame de Vins, in pursuance of d'Hacqueville's advice. I fancy I have written in the proper strain; I always send my letters open to him (d'Hacqueville), who is terrified at seeing so many persons ready to fall upon us: he is afraid you might have neglected to send up the defence made by your friends: he finds the affair is come before the Council, where M. Colbert has a voice, as well as M. de Pomponne, and he was willing to be supported with my poor letters, of which he is to make what use he sees proper. It vexes me, that I am not upon the spot to attend to this affair myself; not that I imagine I could do better than d'Hacqueville, but then there would be two instead of one, and I should have the satisfaction of being of some little assistance to you; but Providence has not thought fit to indulge me with my desire. It is certain that d'Hacqueville will leave no stone unturned; for never was man more zealous in the cause of a friend than he is: he is a treasure of goodness, friendship, and ability, and for exactness and assiduity, no one can compare with him. I now live in hopes of seeing this affair speedily and happily terminated. Not but that I shall open the letters I receive from him with some emotion, because I look upon myself as particularly interested in an affair of so much importance to you, and your Province. You are advised not to have recourse to reprisals with regard to the nobility: those you might attack have less than they think, but more than enough: we shall see. I am at a curious distance to thrust my head into these sort of affairs! I wrote three days ago to the illustrious *Sapho*[1], and to Corbinelli; but I have no fears from that quarter; it is a Minister I fear.

[1] Mademoiselle de Scuderi.

I have spent a day at Vitré with M. de Pommereuil, who told me before the Princesse, that he had stayed solely for love of me. He talked much, both at Malicorne and Laval, of his intimacy with me, and how greatly he esteemed me: for my part, I made no reply, for I hate people who pretend to know all the world; it looks so presuming, that I cannot endure it. I was therefore quite silent, till M. de Pommereuil had ended his wonders, and then I simply nodded assent. We soon entered into a very long conversation; we took Brittany to pieces, while the Princesse was at prayers with her little flock. He is received everywhere like a god, and not without reason, for he is come to restore justice and good order, and to be a curb upon ten thousand men, who would otherwise eat us all up alive. His commission is to continue no longer than spring; and he accepted of it purely to make his court, and not his fortune; for that goes in a different channel, he thinks of nothing but how to please everybody. He will live very well with M. de Chaulnes, but he will make the most of every point he may give up for the sake of living quietly; for he is sensible that, provided one does not yield like a fool, it is the best way not to make a stir about trifles, as it can only tend to the hindrance of the service. He spoke to me of you, which gave me as much pleasure as if he had talked to me of myself.

You have discovered very humorously the source of our attachment to Confessors: it is precisely the reason which makes us talk for ten years following with a lover; for with the former, we had rather, like Mademoiselle d'Aumale [1], speak ill of ourselves, than not talk at all. I am told this precious personage will cut a fine figure at her return. I am astonished at what I hear respecting Madame de Maintenon; it is said she is not so much the object of general admiration as she was; and that the

[1] Mademoiselle d'Aumale, sister of Maréchal de Schomberg, was the pupil, and confidential friend, of Madame de Maintenon: she established herself in a nunnery at St. Cyr. The author of the *Memoirs of Maintenon,* quotes, in many places, from the authority of her manuscript *Life of Madame de Maintenon.*

proverb has been verified in her; my friend at Lyons seems less fascinated with her: the Lady of Honour[1] too, seems to cool a little upon it: all this gives room for moral and religious reflections, to my little friend: take no notice of this. I would advise you to write a word or two by d'Hacqueville, by way of congratulation to Madame de La Fayette, on the Abbey she has lately had given her. Adieu, my dearest child: methinks I do not love you much to-day; well! I will love you the more for it another time, so comfort yourself with that. Tell me your opinion of the *Moral Essays*: is it not a charming book?

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*LETTER 370

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to the Comte* DE BUSSY.

The Rocks, December 20, 1675.

I cannot comprehend why I have not written to you; for it is certainly my place to congratulate the new bride on her new marriage, to pay my compliments to the new husband and the new father-in-law. In short, my dear cousin, all is new but my friendship for you, which is very old, and which often makes me think of you, and of everything that interests you. I had taken it into my head that you had promised to send me the particulars of the wedding, and I believe I was waiting for this: but it would have been an excess of politeness, and by all the rules of etiquette, it is my place to begin. I am very glad you were pleased with my little story: I thought yours of Madame d'Heudicourt equally good. For my part I do not see the necessity of banishing them when they are short, and full of wit, as yours always are; no one certainly can tell a story with so much effect as you do: my daughter and I have often said so.

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[1] Madame de Richelieu.

LETTER 371

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Vitré, Saturday-Sunday, December 22, 1675.

I am come here, my dear child, to see Madame de Chaulnes, the little personage, and M. de Rohan, who are going to set out for Paris. Madame de Chaulnes had written to request me to come and take leave of her: she was to have come to *The Rocks* yesterday, but her excuse was, that she was afraid of being robbed by the soldiers that are upon the road, and therefore M. de Rohan had desired her to stay till to-day: but all this while fish and flesh suffer for it, for I have expected her ever since Thursday. I think it is acting rather too familiarly, after having written to me positively that she should come. The Princesse herself thinks it not quite right; but after all, we must excuse persons who are a little beside themselves: I hope you will never experience a thousandth part of what they have suffered within a month. Ten thousand men have been sent into the Province without their having been apprised of the matter, or having any more power over them than you have. M. de Pommereuil is with the troops at Rennes; he is considered everywhere as a divinity, though every step he has taken has been previously concerted in Paris; but then he keeps up the strictest discipline, and prevents his men from committing disorders; this you will allow is a great deal. Madame de Rohan and Madame de Coëtquen have been greatly relieved since his coming. The Princesse de Tarente is in hopes that MONSIEUR and MADAME will procure her some relief too; and indeed it is much to be wished, for she has not a foot of land besides the estate here, and it would be a disastrous circumstance to see all her tenants ruined before her face. We shall be safe, if she is so. This, my dear, is a long article from Brittany; but we must put an end to the sub-

ject; you can judge how full the head is of such matters in the country.

I did not wait for a letter from you, to write to M. de Pomponne, and to Madame de Vins. I did my best. I took counsel of d'Hacqueville, who, if I am not mistaken, expects something considerable from that quarter. Let me desire you not to check your pen when it is upon the subject of Provence: your affairs are mine: in short, curb it in nothing, for it is an admirable one; and when it is unrestrained, we may say of it, as of Ariosto's, that it charms where it leaves off, and where it begins: every subject you take up, makes amends for that you lay down. The passage about throwing off the monk's habit to please His Holiness, is truly laughable. But do not tell it to M. de Grignan, with his gravity; for my part, God forgive me, I cannot help finding something uncommonly humorous in it; nothing can be written with more life and spirit. I think you are even more sprightly in your letters, than in your conversation. You long, you say, to be alone: good heavens, my dear child, come to these woods, they are a perfect solitude; the weather is still so fine, that I spend every day there till dusk, and I think of you a thousand and a thousand times with such affection, that it would be to understand it very little, if you think I could describe it. My son plagues me with a foolish book he is perpetually reading at my elbow, it is *Pharamond*[1]: he takes me from my more serious reading, and, under the pretence that I shall hurt my eyes, he obliges me to listen to nonsense that I could wish to forget. He is very good, for he is always thinking of something to amuse me. He intended to have written to you to-day, but I do not think he will be able to do it, for we are not at home, and while I am writing to you, he is entertaining the Princesse at ombre[2], in her own chamber, who always speaks of you in terms of the greatest esteem and admiration.

[1] A romance of La Calprenède's.

[2] A Spanish game of cards.

If I were allowed to give you my advice, my dear, it should be to lay aside all thoughts of going to Grignan. What end will such a journey answer? and then there is the Durance, and a bleak north wind: in short, what need is there for so much hurry and bustle? You are very comfortable at Aix, why not pass your winter there? For my part, when I am in the country, I never think of cities, and if I were perfectly settled in a city, the thoughts of the country would strike me with horror. I talk a little at random, for want of properly knowing your reasons. What those of M. de Maillanes may be for loving La Trousse I cannot tell, but I hope they are good ones. These gentlemen honour us sometimes with their ill humours, but make themselves perfectly adored by strangers: I have heard a great many good things of Maillanes, and that the Prince has mentioned him to the King, in the most favourable manner, and as a youth of great bravery. I was delighted when they told me this in Paris. Pray, my dear, let us see how far the Coadjutor's indolence will carry him: good heavens! how happy he is, and how much could I envy sometimes his strange indifference to everything that passes in life! This is all the news I have to tell you of him.

I have told you how Bourdelot has honoured me, and you also, with his cold approbation. I said enough to make you understand that I find him exactly as you found him. Good heavens! what an excellent answer I wrote him! It is foolish perhaps to say this of myself; but I had a very good and a very spirited pen on that day: what a rage I was in! Is it possible to have understanding and not to know it?

I hear you have a band; I am persuaded it is a good one: you know I honour everything that is music; but, though I pretend to some skill in it, I am not equal to M. de Grignan. Has Madame de Beaumont as much wit as ever? and Roquesante too? do they still fast upon bread and water? what need is there for all these penances, when he has brought so many plenary indulgences with him?

They certainly do not want any assistance or support. But let us say a word or two about Denmark. The Princesse[1] is at the siege of Wismar, with the King and Queen, where the two lovers perform actions worthy of a romance. The favourite has negotiated a marriage for the Prince, and left the lovely Princesse to hear the news from common report; nay, he was two whole days without seeing her; this was not the action of a fool. I should not be surprised if it should at last appear, that he is the son of some King of the Visigoths.

You alarm me, with the intelligence that your old widow is about to marry a young man. It is not right to entertain too good an opinion of people at first; it is much better to wait a little, and observe their proceedings. You are surprised, you say, that the good folks about you cannot comprehend, why you should sometimes wish to be absent from them; and I, on my side, cannot bear the reflection, that they should have the barbarity to wish me to pass my life always at *The Rocks*, without thinking of returning, or any society more delightful than that of Mademoiselle du Plessis: it is very mortifying to think that a whole Province should have such an opinion of one, as to think that one has no acquaintance in Paris; I had intended to complain of it to you.

By dint of selling, mortgaging, borrowing, and bestirring ourselves, we have made shift to raise our three millions. *Nous serons si sots que nous prendrons la Rochelle*[2]. This is an old saying, that I would have you apply. We have given the usual gratuities, and have even saved M. d'Harouïs from the danger he was in. But they have treated M. de St.-Malo so very rudely, that his nephew (Guémadeuc) found himself obliged to challenge a gentleman of Lower Brittany. Adieu, my dearest child: it is not one of the least obligations I have to you, that you enter so perfectly into the pleasure I receive from your

[1] Daughter of the Princesse de Tarente.

[2] "We shall be silly enough to take Rochelle." A vaunting speech of the great men at the siege of Rochelle.

long letters; and I hope you will always feel that they constitute the joy and comfort of my existence, and that I know no sorrow greater than that occasioned by a delay of the post.

Sunday.

I was obliged to leave off yesterday owing to the arrival of Madame de Chaulnes, M. de Rohan, and the little personage; they supped here, and set out this morning for Laval, and from thence directly to Paris: if I am not mistaken, M. de Rohan is not sorry to be with the little personage. Madame de Chaulnes gave me a long detail of affairs at the States; I brought her to agree that M. de St.-Malo had made himself ridiculous with his ball: she seems extremely mortified about the troops, as well as her husband, who remains at Rennes equally embarrassed with the presence of Pommereuil. All this little party spoke much of you. When I am at *The Rocks* I will write to you more fully. Indeed, my child, my greatest comfort is thus conversing with you.

LETTER 372

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Tuesday, Christmas-day, 1675.

This is a day, my dear child, in which I have given my pen liberty to write what it pleases; it chooses to begin by the joy I feel at having left Vitré, and being returned hither in peace and repose, after two tedious days of talk, ceremony, and patience, in listening to all the idle news that is prepared for Paris; I had the satisfaction, however, to find fault with some of it, particularly the ball M. de St.-Malo gave the States. Madame de Tarente

laughed heartily to see me so warm and full of my reasons of disapprobation. But I had rather be in these woods in the manner you know, than be at Vitré with the air of a fine lady. The good Princesse[1] went to her religious assembly: I heard them all singing one another deaf[2]. I felt real pleasure in hearing mass after it; I have not for a long time been so much pleased with being a good Catholic. I dined with the Minister: my son disputed like a demon. I went to vespers in the pure spirit of opposition: this has taught me a little to comprehend the sacred obstinacy of martyrdom.

My son is gone to Rennes to see the Governor. Last night we performed our devotions in our fine chapel. I have still the little country lass, who is very pretty. Her house borders on my park. The mother is gone to Rennes, and I have kept the daughter with me. She plays at *trictrac* and at *reversi*, is agreeable enough, and has great vivacity and cheerfulness of manner. Her name is Jeannette; she incommodes me a little, like Fidèle. La Plessis has an ague. It is amusing to see how angry and jealous she is when she finds this girl here, and the strife there is between them to hold my cane or my muff. But enough of this: I have made a great deal out of nothing.

The Forbins have an affair of great importance, on the subject of little Janson[3], who has killed Chassingrimon, the nephew of M. de La Feuillade, in a duel. This affair is before the Parliament; and the King has said, that if justice had been done on the death of Château-

[1] Madame de Tarente. She was a Protestant.

[2] *Chantsient des oreilles.* An expression of Panurge in *Rabelais.*

[3] He is the same who, after having retired to Germany, where he served at the siege of Vienna, and the taking of Bude, returned to France under the name of Comte de Rosemberg, shortly after war was declared between that country and France. He was employed in a foreign regiment, and was dangerously wounded at the battle of Marseilles. He afterwards retired to the monastery of La Trappe, where he took his vows the 7th of December, 1703, under the name of brother Arsène, and was one of the nine monks who were sent the following year into Tuscany to establish the ancient observance of Citeaux, in a monastery of the same order.

vilain, there would not have been so many duels since. Thus is another youth obliged, like the rest, to leave France, and to take refuge in a foreign country. This is a house of great intrigue.

What is your opinion of poor Madame de Puisieux? Her cold has settled upon her lungs. This disorder has been very prevalent here. Our relation Laney died of it in three days: he was a great favourite with me, and I am grieved at his death. Desire d'Hacqueville to give your compliments to the Rarais: nothing more is necessary. The Cardinal has intrusted me with the secret of his being at Saint Mihel to pass the holidays; but he desires me to say nothing of it for fear of scandal. It was impossible for me to forbear communicating to him the article from Rome, in your last letter. It is arranged with perfect harmony: I am sure he will think it inimitable, and that he will recognise the beauties of the style and sentiments of his dear niece.

Madame de Coulanges has had a long conversation with her fat cousin[1], which she hopes will be very much to the advantage of M. de Coulanges. Has not the great lady written to you? Madame de Vins has just written me a very pretty letter, and, as you say, as full of flattery as herself. She tells me, the only way not to wish for my friendship, is never to have seen me. The whole letter is in the same strain: it is a bundle of feathers, instead of a bundle of thorns.

Do you know Le Boulay[2]? I believe you do. He met Madame de Courcelles[3] by accident; to see her and to adore her was the same thing; a fancy took them to go to Geneva, where they are at present; and from whence he has written Manicamp[4] the most entertaining letter in the world. Madame de Mazarin, on her part, is rambling about the wide world: it is thought she is in England,

[1] M. de Louvois.

[2] He was the *Mist*, and an excellent companion.

[3] Marie Sidonia de Lénoncourt.

[4] M. de Longueval-Manicamp, the intimate friend of M. de Boulay.

where you know there is neither priest, nor faith, nor law; but I do not believe it is true that, as the song says[1], she is for driving the King away too.

We are grieved for Jabac: what a foolish discovery, and how disagreeable are old sins[2]! The good Abbé will desire Rousseau to endeavour to pacify him till our return. Is it not insulting a lady of your rank to occupy your time with such silly nonsense as this? I say "as this," because there is nonsense of a different kind. Yours is always entertaining; but mere impertinences, without rhyme or reason, though ridiculous, are not diverting. I conclude with wishing you a merry festival[3], and assuring you, that I love you with an affection which will in all probability accompany me *in articulo mortis*[4].

Did I tell you, that Madame de Fontevrault paid a visit to Madame de Coulanges, merely to see your portrait? No pilgrimage was ever undertaken in honour of a lovelier saint.

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*LETTER 373

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, December 29, 1675.

I thank you, my dear child, for having preserved some remembrance *del paterno nido*[5]. Alas! our house would not know itself for joy, if it could receive you: why is it not possible to see you again in these beautiful walks?

[1] A song of Blot's.

[2] She means an old debt for goods delivered to Madame de Grignan.

[3] The custom of wishing a merry festival (*souhaiter les bonnes fêtes*) at Christmas and Easter, is still retained in many provinces, and particularly in Provence.

[4] Till death. [Translation.]

[5] Of the paternal nest. [Translation.]

What say you to the marriage of La Mothe[1]? Are beauty, youth, or propriety of conduct, necessary to procure a settlement for a young woman? Providence! Providence! to that only can we have recourse.

Madame de Puisieux[2] is raised from the dead again; but only to die two deaths within a very short time, for she is eighty years of age. Madame de Coulanges tells me what good society there is in our part of the town; but this does not tempt me to return sooner than I at first intended: I am only impelled by business, for as to pleasures, I expect none, and the winter here is not so bad as it is supposed to be: it gives me no horrors. The society of my son is very agreeable to me, and he finds me no less so to him; there is not the least air of mother and son in our conversations. The Princesse is very surprised at it, who has a son without a soul. She is very much disconcerted by the troops, which are arrived at Vitré; she hoped, with reason, to be exempted from them; but notwithstanding that, she has a whole regiment in her town. It would have been a pleasant circumstance, if it had been Grignan's regiment: but do you know, it is stationed at La Trinité, that is, at Bodégat[3]? I have written to the Chevalier (de Grignan) not to derange any plans, for everything is fixed, but that my farmer, my banker, and my steward, may be treated mildly and honourably; it will cost me nothing, and will gain me great credit: this estate is allotted to me, in the division of property.

If I see Le Castellane[4] here I shall treat him handsomely; his name, and the place through which he passed in the summer, will make him of consequence to me. The

[1] One of the three daughters of Madame de La Mothe-Houdancourt, who were all notorious for their adventures in gallantry: this lady married the Duc de La Ferté. *L'Histoire Amoureuse des Gaules,* shows the consequences of this marriage. Scandalous as this book is, what Madame de Sévigné says of the personages who are there described, proves that it contains more scandal than calumny.

[2] Charlotte d'Estampes Valençai, died September 8, 1677.

[3] An estate which belonged to the House of Sévigné.

[4] A relation of M. de Grignan's.

business of my President goes on well; he is disposed to pay me: this is one of the affairs that brought me here. The one the Abbé de La Vergne has undertaken is worthy of himself: you represent him to me as a very respectable man.

Do you not intend to read the *Moral Essays,* and to give me your opinion of them? For my part, I am charmed with them; and so I am with the Funeral Oration on M. de Turenne; there are passages in it which must have affected all who were present. I do not doubt but it has been sent you; tell me if you do not think it very fine. Do you not intend to finish Josephus? We read a great deal of serious as well as lighter subjects; fable, and history. We are so deeply engaged with these, that we have scarcely leisure for any other occupations. They pity us in Paris; they think us confined to a fire-side by the inclemency of the season, and languishing under a dearth of amusement; but, my dear, I walk; I find a thousand diversions; the woods are neither wild nor inhospitable. It is not for passing my time here instead of in Paris, that I am to be pitied.

M. de Coulanges has sanguine hopes, from a conversation his wife has had with M. de Louvois. If he had the Controllership of Lyons conjointly with his father-in-law, it would be a very excellent thing: and this is the world! everyone thinks there is no happiness out of Paris, and yet labours to establish himself at a hundred leagues' distance from it. I cannot comprehend the new passion of the *Charmer* (M. de Villeroi) ; it is not to be supposed that he can find more than one subject of conversation to entertain a mistress of so low a taste. They say her husband has forbidden her any other company but that of Madame d'Armagnac. Like you, I fancy I see this ancient Medea armed with her wand, and dispersing at her pleasure all those airy phantoms the gallants. They say M. de La Trousse has formed a design upon La Maison; but I do not think he has obtained his liberty, and I could reverse last year's song:

La Trousse est vainqueur de Brancas,
Têtu ne lui résiste pas,
De lui seul Coulange est contente,
Que chacun chante, etc. [1]

But this is between you and I, my dear; and I know that, in other company, I must change my note.

The length of our answers alarms us, and makes us comprehend the vast distance that separates us. Alas, my child, how painfully I feel it; and how melancholy does it make me! Were it not for this, should I not be too happy in having such a son with me? He will tell you himself, how grieved he is in being at such a distance from you. Adieu, my dearest. Write to me of your health and your weather; everything, trifling as it may be, is interesting to me. My health is as good as you could wish. I expected your brother, but he is not returned. He is a weak creature: but if he should marry, while he is upon this little expedition! I am certain, however, they detain him upon no serious design; if he amuses himself where he is, it is well. Adieu, my dearest. Does M. de Grignan salute me?

LETTER 374

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Tuesday, New Year's Day, 1676.

We have now entered upon the next year, as M. de Montbazon said. I wish it may prove a happy one to you; and if you think the continuance of my love can make any part of that happiness, you may safely calculate upon it.

This letter from d'Hacqueville will inform you of the success of our affairs in Provence. It exceeds our hopes;

[1] La Trousse has conquered Brancas; Têtu is not able to resist him; Coulanges is satisfied with him alone. Let everyone sing, etc. [Translation.]

as you will see by the letters I received a few days since, which I send you. The thorn is now happily extracted; the den of thieves is demolished; the ghost of M. de Marseilles is laid; the credit of the cabal is vanished; insolence is trodden to the ground; but let me conjure you to use your victory with moderation: consider, as our friend d'Hacqueville says, that prudence and generosity oblige you to it. You will see also how I betray his secret to you, for the pleasure of drawing aside the curtain, which he had intended to keep closed even to you. But I cannot consent to leave you in doubt of the sentiments you ought to entertain for the friend, and his sister-in-law [1], for it appears to me, that they have even done more than they have told me; and as the greatest recompense, they desire no acknowledgment. Treat them, therefore, in their own way, and enjoy in silence their true and substantial friendship. Take care not to let a word escape you which might let the good d'Hacqueville know that I have sent you this letter; you know him well; his scrupulosity would not allow him to comprehend this poetical license. Thus, my dear, I throw myself upon your mercy, and entreat you not to draw me into a quarrel with a friend, to whom we have so many obligations. In short, I put myself in your power, and, knowing your fidelity, I apprehend no danger from it: but you must likewise answer for M. de Grignan, for it would be no satisfaction to me to have my secret kept by you and betrayed by him.

I have another secret to tell you: this is with me a day of revealing secrets, and likewise of discovering disappointed lovers. Your brother has just returned from Rennes; the only trophy he has brought from thence is a simple song, which has made me laugh. It expresses in verse what I told you partly the other day in prose. We have thought of an advantageous match for him, but it is not yet mature: the fair one is not quite fifteen, and they wish her to be a little older, before they think of marrying her.

[1] M. de Pomponne and Madame de Vins.

What say you to the ingenious damsel we mentioned to you in our last, who was at a loss to determine the day after Easter-eve? She is a pretty little creature, and diverts us much; her age is under fourteen. I wish you could see her in a morning devour immense slices of bread and butter, and in the afternoon scrunch up green apples with brown bread. Her simplicity, and pleasing figure, are a relief to us after we have been teased with the impertinence and affection of Mademoiselle du Plessis.

But let us change the subject: have they not sent you the Funeral Oration on M. de Turenne? M. de Coulanges and the little Cardinal have almost ruined me in postage of letters; but I am pleased with this expense. It seems to me, that I have never seen so fine a piece of eloquence. They say the Abbé Fléchier has hopes of surpassing it; but I defy him. He may perhaps give us a finer picture of a hero, but not a finer picture of M. de Turenne; this is what M. de Tulle has performed inimitably, in my opinion. The description of his heart is a master-piece; the rectitude, simplicity, truth, integrity, and unaffected modesty, of which it was composed; in short, everything is represented with so much justice, that I am charmed with it; and if the critics cease to esteem it, since it has appeared in print,

Je rends graces aux dieux de n'être pas Romain [1].

Will you not say one word of the *Moral Essays,* of the *Treatise of tempting God,* and *The resemblance between Self-love and Charity*? Ours is a fine conversation, maintained at a hundred leagues distance! however, we do all that is possible to be done in such a case.

I send you a note written by the pretty Abbess. How playfully she writes! This sample may suffice to give you an idea of the charms of her wit.

Adieu, my dearest; I charge you to keep all my secrets. I resign the pen to the pretty gentleman who

[1] "I thank the gods that I am not a Roman:" a verse of Corneille's in the Tragedy of the *Horatii.*

stands at my elbow. He says you dipped yours in fire to write your last note to him; it is true, nothing was ever so entertaining.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*
(*Enclosed in his Mother's letter.*)

Why did I say in fire? it was in gall and vinegar that you dipped that impertinent implement, employed by you in making so many ridiculous reflections, begging your pardon, on your humble servant. How can a lady, so skilled in gallantry, suppose me incapable of choosing a mistress? Is it because I was for three years devoted to a pious damsel, who was only to be captivated by a lover who could charm her by the winning eloquence of his sermons, and the graceful manner of his benedictions on the prostrate people? You have just reason to believe that I was soon disengaged from her chains. You know me to be too good a Catholic to dispute anything with the church: and it is a regulation made long ago, that the clergy are to have the preference of the nobility in obtaining favours from ladies. I have lately met with a note composed by a great luminary of the church. He addressed it to the saint he adored, and humbly implored her to answer his tenderness by some proof of hers. His words are these:—"Refuse me not, I beseech you, this favour; and consider that you will do me a singular office" —of Christian charity, I presume. Was not this very pathetic? If my letters to Madame de Choisi were less passionate, they were not perhaps less gallant. I am now again the slave of another beauty, since I have been at Rennes. It is Madame de ****, she who behaved herself so prettily at the Church of the Capuchins: you may remember that you diverted us with mimicking her. She is grown a wit, and repeats the elegies of the Comtesse de La Suze in the dialect and accent of Brittany.

That precious piece of affectation Mademoiselle du Plessis is constantly with us from nine in the morning.

She gave us the other day a most entertaining account of a little secret malady which had given her great uneasiness. She came, she said, to pay her *devoirs* to my mother, the moment she had taken a certain medicine to comfort her bowels, which she had been obliged to have recourse to, to allay a soreness, occasioned by too powerful a dose of rhubarb.

I wish you a Happy Day and a Happy Year, my dear sister; and desire the favour of you not to insult me, or undervalue my taste, which I assure you is very good: as a specimen, I bring forward my regard for M. de Grignan, whom I very much honour.

LETTER 375

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Saturday, January 5, 1676.

Here they are two; and they are both very welcome. I never yet received three packets at a time; I should have been quite out of patience, because I must have waited for them twelve days, and I think eight sufficient. As to my being fatigued with so much reading, it is impossible your style should ever tire; I defy even you, who pique yourself upon such extreme want of application, as renders it difficult for the most artful writer to engage your attention, to forbear to read even with eagerness the most trifling part of such letters as yours. This is a pleasure you have no possibility of experiencing, and which I have dearly purchased: I would not advise M. de Grignan to envy it me. It is true, the intelligence we receive from Paris is delightful: I am like you, I never answer a single word to it; but I am not dumb for all that; my son and my daughter furnish me with sufficient subjects for writing, as you will see by the last letter I sent you.

You have much obliged me, by explaining to me the reasons of your going to Lambesc: I should not have failed to have asked with surprise and concern, what urgent affair could have drawn you thither. I think the little inconvenience of a stiff neck, was well recompensed by its excusing you from the fatigue of dining with such a crowd as you escaped by it; you did very well in leaving your herd to feed by themselves.

I shall never forget the astonishment I was under at a midnight mass, when I heard one of our profane airs sung as a part of that religious ceremony; this novelty surprised me extremely.

I suppose you have by this time read the *Moral Essays*. Tell me, are you pleased with them? The passage in Josephus which you point out to me, is one of the finest that can be read: you must confess there is a grandeur and dignity in his history, which you can find in no other. If you entertained me more with yourself, and your manner of employing your time, I should have less to say of my amusements, and our correspondence would be more agreeable. Among friends who love, and are interested in each other, nothing is more pleasing than the mutual interchange of speaking of themselves; we take from others to give to ourselves. You may have seen, by what my son has said of our neighbour [1], that she is not of this opinion; she entertains us with particularities relating to her person, which we have not the least curiosity to know.

It were well if our soldiers here were like your *cordeliers* [2]; they amuse themselves with stealing and plundering: the other day they were for making the experiment of roasting a young child; it would be endless to relate the rest of their bad behaviour. M. de Chaulnes wrote me word, that he wished to pay me a visit; I very graciously desired him not to give himself the trouble, and frankly told him, I declined the honour on account of the trouble

[1] Mademoiselle du Plessis.

[2] Franciscan-friars, or Grey-friars.

it would occasion, since I could not receive him here with so much ease as at Paris.

You have seen my letter of consolation to B****; could I write to him differently? You paint him to me so very naturally, that I still fancy his very thoughts are visible to me, if that be possible, for I own there is a great obscurity in his words.

You tell me very seriously, speaking of my letter, that your father and I were not at all related to each other: I desire to know how he was allied to you in your opinion? If you do not answer this question, I will ask the little damsel who is with us; perhaps she may interpret this difficulty as learnedly as she determined that concerning the day after Easter-eve. We are so very much pleased with her simplicity, that Mademoiselle du Plessis is almost dying with jealousy of her. She inquires of all the family how I treat her; and there are none of them to whom it is not an amusement to stab her to the heart, by giving repeated instances of my fondness for her little rival. One tells her, that I love her as well as I do my daughter; another, that she sleeps with me, which would certainly be the greatest proof of my affection for her; another, that I intend to take her with me to Paris; that I kiss her; that I dote on her; that my uncle the Abbé will give her ten thousand francs, and that, if she had but twenty thousand crowns, I should certainly marry her to my son: in short, there is so much nonsense of this kind, and everything is so well kept up among my little household, that we frequently cannot help laughing at the variety of stories they invent: while we are diverting ourselves, however, poor du Plessis is dying with envy. But the best is, that you should know her so well, and reason so justly, when you observe, that if her ague leaves her upon my approach, she certainly counterfeits it; however, she has been teased so much, that I believe we shall give it her in good earnest. This family is certainly destined to divert us. Did I never tell you, that her father once kept us in a continual roar of laughter for six weeks

together? My son begins to comprehend that this neighbourhood is the chief beauty of *The Rocks*.

I think there is something very entertaining in the rendezvous of your traveller with M. Montvergne. Their arrival on the same day at the Cape of Good Hope, seems to have fallen out as exactly as if they had agreed to meet upon the plain at a certain hour to hunt. You cannot doubt of the pleasure it would be to me to converse with this gentleman from the Indies, for you remember how much I have teased you to read Herrera[1], which I have read myself with great delight. If you have as much leisure and application as I have, this Spanish History would furnish an entertainment worthy of you.

Our good friend d'Hacqueville passes to and fro between Paris and St. Germain without ceasing, for the sake of our affairs; were it not for this, we should scarcely endure the tedious letters he favours us with. I confess to you, that the passage in question has a little too much of repetition; but you will pardon my curiosity which begun it, and my pen continued it: for I assure you the pen has often a great share in the superfluous words with which our letters are filled. One of my wishes to begin the year with is, that mine may be as pleasing to you, as yours are to me.

The good Princesse still loves me; she has been a little indisposed, and has taken a sweat, which is her sovereign remedy for all disorders. The late Comte du Lude said, he had never had any illness in which he was not relieved by it. It is M. de Chêne's remedy for all bodily pains; and if I had a stiff neck, and took any remedy that was advised, as I always do, you would be surprised to hear that I was under the *archet*. The Princesse always speaks wonders of you; she knows and esteems you. For my part, I believe that, according to the ancient doctrine of the Transmigration of Souls, your former existence was in Germany; you were, doubtless, the King of Sweden,

[1] A Spanish writer, author of a *General History of India* in four folio volumes, and of many other historical works.

and one of her lovers; and from thence she has derived those impressions of esteem and affection she has for you. Adieu, my dear; all our family salute yours. But here comes your brother.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*

(Enclosed in his Mother's letter.)

You cannot conceive, my dear sister, how much humour there is in what you say of Mademoiselle du Plessis, till you hear that she has taken the pains to act an ague this year, and contrived that it should leave her on the very day my mother went to dine at Plessis. The joy of hearing that my mother was there, transported her to such a degree, that she vowed by all that was sacred, that she was well, and was very angry that she was not dressed. But somebody said, "Mademoiselle, do you feel no shivering?" "Come, come," replied this amiable Tisiphone, "let us amuse ourselves; say no more of my ague; it is a sordid interested distemper." "Interested, did you say?" said my mother. "Yes, Madame, because it would have me all to itself." "I should have thought it generous," replied my mother in a low tone. This did not prevent the pleasure of seeing so much good company at her house from banishing the ague, which in reality she had not; but we hope the excess of her jealousy will soon give it her. We are under some apprehensions that she will poison the little damsel, who goes everywhere by the name of the favourite of the Princesse and Madame de Sévigné. She said yesterday to M. Rahuel [1], "I had the satisfaction, as I was sitting down at table, to see Madame push away this little girl, to make room for me next to herself." Rahuel replied in his rough manner; "Ah, Mademoiselle, I do not wonder at that, it was only doing honour to your age; besides, this young girl is considered at present as one of the family; Madame treats her as if she was a younger sister of Madame de Grignan." This was all the consolation she had.

[1] Rahuel was the *concierge* of *The Rocks*.

You have reason to speak ill of the troops in Brittany; they do nothing but kill and plunder; they do not at all resemble your monks. Though I am very well satisfied with my mother and my uncle, and have some reason to be so, yet I think I had best take your advice, and turn them out of doors at the end of this month: however, that I may do it in a handsome manner, I will send some guards with them to Paris, to prevent their being robbed, as they pass through a Province so safe under the protection of military government. Adieu, my dear sister; have you been very gay this Christmas? You have *sent your cattle to grass*: that is right. Provence abounds with hills and dales: I only wish, you gentle shepherds, to keep you company. I embrace M. de Grignan: he makes me no reply; but I will take my revenge on him by continuing in good health, and returning safe from every campaign.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *continues and concludes her letter to her Daughter.*

These are excellent fooleries to entertain you with. If the post knew what trifling materials our packets are made of, it would certainly drop them half-way. I will tell you a dream on Wednesday.

LETTER 376

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, January 8, 1676.

This is the day on which I was to tell you my dream. You must know then, that about eight in the morning, after having dreamed about you all the preceding night, though in a confused manner, I thought I saw you plainer than ever, that we were together, and that you were so kind, so good-humoured, so amiable, and so fond of me, that I was almost beside myself with joy; at last I awoke,

but with such a dulness and load upon my spirits at the grief of losing this lovely vision, that I began to sigh and weep so immoderately, that I was obliged to call Marie; and with the help of a glass of cold water, and some of your Hungary water, I recovered myself a little from the dreadful lowness of spirits, but could not get a wink more sleep. It lasted me near a quarter of an hour; and all I can say about it is, that I was never in such a state before. Observe, however, that this is one of the days on which I give my pen the reins.

You have passed a fortnight very sadly at Lambesc: I should pity any other person, but you are so fond of solitude, that time so spent is a carnival to you. But what do you say of St. Géran, who has left her fat husband to spend her carnival at Palice? Such a journey as this, which cannot take her up less than a month, and at such a season of the year, is a matter of surprise to everyone: she will doubtless return in time to attend the sermons. The great Béthune said, when he heard of M. de St. Géran's having received a wound by a cannon-ball before Besançon, "St. Géran is an honest and a good man, but he must be killed before his worth will be truly estimated." His wife, however, does not think so, neither do I; but this was the first thing that happened to present itself to my pen. The Princesse came here yesterday, quite weak with her profuse sweating. She is almost distracted at the ravages committed on her estate by the military, and the little attention of MONSIEUR and MADAME towards relieving her. She thinks Madame de Monaco contributes to this forgetfulness, in the hope that, by distressing her in her income, she may prevent her coming to Paris, as her presence always robs her of some part of MADAME'S favour, to whose sleeve she is for ever pinned. Indeed the aversion is reciprocal: apropos of reciprocal, a gentleman belonging to the Princesse told me pleasantly enough, that when he was at the ball which M. de St.-Malo gave to our States, he overheard a Bas-Breton declaring his passion to a young lady, to which the fair

one made a proper reply; but he continuing to press his suit with great ardour, the nymph, whose patience was quite exhausted, made him this answer, "Sir, you may love me as much as you please, but, upon my word, I cannot be *reciprocal*." I think this kind of answer the best, and, indeed, the only one, that can be given, to cut such addresses short at once.

My son is gone to Vitré to see the ladies: he left a great many remembrances for you. I fancy honest d'Hacqueville will settle the sum that is to be given for the exchange; and as Lauzun will take our guidonage, the little *frater* will mount a step. He is only nine hundred leagues from port.

We have had dreadful weather here for these two or three days. It rained trees in the park, and shrubs in the garden. I believe all our marriage schemes have been carried away by the high wind; one father tells us his daughter is but fifteen, and he will not marry her till she is twenty; another, that he would have a robe at least: but, however, we have not to reproach ourselves with want of attention. Adieu, my dearest child; will you not suffer me to embrace you?

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*LETTER 377

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, January 12, 1676.

You may fill your letters with whatever you please, and still be assured that I read them with great pleasure and equal approbation; no one can write better than you do, and it is not my friendship only that leads me to form this opinion.

You delight me, by saying you like the *Moral Essays*; did I not tell you they would suit your taste? As soon as I began to read them, I could think of nothing but of sending them to you; you know I am communicative,

and do not like to enjoy a pleasure alone. If this book had been written on purpose for you, it could not have been more calculated to please you. What language! what energy in the arrangement of the words! I think I never read French but in this book. *The Resemblance of Charity to Self-love,* and of the heroic modesty of M. de Turenne and the Prince to Christian humility—But I forbear; this work deserves to be praised from beginning to end; but I should write a strange letter if I were to do so. I am very glad, however, you like it, and I have a better opinion of my own judgment in consequence. You do not admire the *Life of Josephus*; but it is sufficient if you approve his actions and his history. Did you not think him very happy in the cave, where they drew lots who should stab himself the last?

We laughed till we cried, at the story of the girl who sung the indecent song for which she confessed, aloud, in the church. Nothing can be more novel and amusing. I think she was in the right: the confessor certainly wished to hear the song, for he was not satisfied with the girl's accusation of herself. I fancy I see him bursting with laughter the first at this adventure. We often send you ridiculous stories, but we cannot surpass this. I always talk of Brittany, and it is to encourage you to talk of Provence; it is a country in which I am more interested than in any other: my journey thither takes away all possibility of being tired with what you tell me, because I am acquainted with every body, and understand every thing perfectly. I have not forgotten the beauty of your winters. Our season is very fine here: I walk every day, and have almost made a new park round the waste land at the end of the mall. I am planting four rows of trees there: it will be a great improvement, for all this part is now uniform and cultivated.

But I shall take my departure, in spite of all these charms, in February: the Abbe's affairs are still more urgent than yours, which has prevented me from offering our house to Mademoiselle de Méri: she has complained

of this to several persons, I understand; but I know not what reason she has to do so. The *worthy* is in raptures with your letters; I often show him passages that I know will please him. He thanks you for what you say of the *Moral Essays*; he was delighted with them himself. The little girl is still with us; she has an active little mind which has never been exercised, and we take pleasure in improving it. She is in perfect ignorance; it is an amusement to us to give her some general knowledge: a few words of this great universe, of empires, countries, kings, religions, and wars, of astronomy and geography: it is pleasant to see the unfolding of all these things in a little head which has never beheld a town or a river, and who thought the whole world extended no farther than our park; she amuses us highly. I informed her to-day of the capture of Wismar; she knows we are sorry for it, because the King of Sweden is our ally. Such are our amusements. The Princesse is delighted that her daughter has taken Wismar: she is a true Dane. She has asked MONSIEUR and MADAME to exempt her entirely from the soldiery, so that we shall all be safe.

Madame de La Fayette is very grateful for your letter; she thinks you very polite and obliging: but does it not appear strange to you that her brother-in-law is not dead, and that such mistakes should arise at the short distance of Toulon and Aix? Upon the questions you put to the *frater* I decide boldly, that he who is angry, and shows his anger, is preferable to the deceiver, who conceals his malignity under fair and specious appearances. There is a stanza in Ariosto descriptive of guile [1]: I would transcribe it, but I have not time to look for it. The good d'Hacqueville still talks to me of the journey of St.-Géran, and to prove how short her stay will be, he says she can only receive one of my letters at Palice. This is how he treats an acquaintance of a week: he is just the same with respect to others, but this is excellent. I forgot to say that

[1] The reader will find this stanza, with a translation of it, at the foot of the next page.

I had thought like you of the different ways of painting the human heart, some white and others blacker than black. You know what colour mine is of, for you[1].

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*
(Enclosed in his Mother's letter.)

I am not at all in good humour; I have just had a conversation with the *worthy* on the badness of the times, and you know what a heart-breaking subject that is. I could not however help smiling at the story of the young girl at Lambesc: you may guess what I should have done, if I had been in my usual spirits. She was as anxious to receive absolution, as the good father was to hear the song, and probably they were both satisfied. With regard to the *Moral Essays,* I humbly ask your pardon for saying that the *Treatise on Self-Knowledge* appears to me forced, sophistical, in many places absolute nonsense, and extremely tiresome from beginning to end. I honour the *Methods of tempting God* with my approbation: but can you, who admire and are so excellent a judge of good style, at least if one may judge by your own, can you set in competition the style of Port-Royal with M. Pascal's? It is his which gives me a distaste for every other. M.

[1] Hereunder is the stanza from Ariosto alluded to in this letter:

Avea piaceval viso, abito onesto,
Un umil volger d'occhi, un andar grave,
Un parlar sì benigno e sì modesto
Che parea Gabriel, che dicesse: AVE.
Era brutta e deforme in tutto il resto
Ma nascondea queste fattezze prave
Con lungo abito e largo; e sotto quello
Attossicato avea sempre il coltello.

ORLANDO FURIOSO. Canto xiv.

Her garb was decent, lovely was her face,
Her eyes were bashful, sober was her pace;
With speech whose charms might every heart assail,
Like his who gave the blest salute of—Hail!
But all deformed and brutal was the rest,
Which close she covered with her ample vest,
Beneath whose folds, prepar'd for bloody strife,
Her hand for ever grasped a poisoned knife.

Hoole's Translation.

Nicole introduces a great many fine words into his, but in the end they weary, and make me sick; it is like eating too much *blanc-mange*: this is my decision. I must tell you however, by way of appeasing your wrath, that I am in some degree reconciled to Montaigne. He has some excellent and inimitable points, and some puerile and extravagant ones: I do not retract that opinion. When you have finished Josephus, pray read a moral treatise of Plutarch's entitled, "*How to distinguish a Friend from a Flatterer.*" I have read it again this year, and was more pleased with it than at first. Send us word whether the question you ask me of persons whose anger evaporates in vehement language, or those who conceal it under specious appearances, relates to Madame de La Fayette: we know nothing, because we do not perhaps know all you know. I rebel against what she says of M. de Tulle's Funeral Oration, because I think it fine, very fine; I rebel less against her unfavourable opinion of the *Moral Essays*; and without having read the new opera [1], I agree heartily to all the ill she says of it. My beautiful little sister, adieu.

LETTER 378

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Friday, January 17, 1676.

You have talked to me of stiff necks till you have given me one, for I cannot move my right side; these are little ailments, my dear, that nobody compassionates, and yet I assure you they are very painful. My hopeful son is bursting with laughter: I shall certainly rap him upon the knuckles as soon as I am able. In the meantime, my dear, I embrace you most cordially with my left arm. The *frater* is going to entertain you with some trash. Your Hungary water will have cured me before this letter has reached Paris. Adieu, my dear child.

[1] The opera of *Atys*.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*

(Enclosed in his Mother's letter.)

I am not laughing at my mother, though she tells you so; but her ailment has nothing in it to cause the least alarm; and so we pity her, and amuse her in her bed, and do all that lies in our power to relieve her. I conclude you will depend upon the Abbé and me, in what regards the health of a person so precious to us both: be perfectly easy in this respect, my dear sister, for, depend upon it, we shall be quite well when you begin to be anxious about us.

I now send you the history of our Province. You are already informed on what terms M. de Coëtquen is with M. de Chaulnes; they have lately been at daggers-drawn, and the former has actually presented a Memorial to the King, complaining of M. de Chaulnes's conduct since he has had the government. After this, he returned to his government by His Majesty's orders, came to Rennes, waited upon M. de Pommereuil, and stayed in the town from eight o'clock in the morning till nine at night, without going near M. de Chaulnes; nor did he intend it, as he told M. de Coëtlogon, and seemed to pride himself in braving M. de Chaulnes in his own capital. About nine at night, just as he had got to his inn, and thought of nothing but going to bed, he heard a coach stop at the door, and saw a person come into his room with an exempt's bâton [1]; this was M. de Chaulnes's Captain of the Guard, who desired him from his master to come immediately to the Bishop's palace, where he at present resides. Accordingly M. de Coëtquen followed him down stairs, where he found a coach, surrounded by four and twenty guards, which he stepped into, and was conveyed without disorder or noise to the Bishop's palace. When he came there, he was introduced into the ante-chamber, and there left for nearly a quarter of an hour, with proper people to prevent

[1] An *exempt* is a kind of military messenger.

his making his escape. At length M. de Chaulnes appeared, and said to him, "Sir, I have sent for you to order you to pay the francs-fiefs in your government: I know," added he, "what you have said to the King, which you will be called upon to prove;" and then turning his back upon him, retired into his private room. Poor Coëtquen was quite thunderstruck, and returned to his inn, half-mad with rage and vexation.

LETTER 379

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, January 19, 1676.

I am much better, my dear; this same stiff neck was in truth a very pretty fit of the rheumatism; it is a disorder attended with violent pain, and want of rest and sleep; but it gives no apprehension respecting the consequences. This is the eighth day; a gentle dose of medicine and a sudorific will restore me again. I have been bled once in the foot, and now abstinence and patience will put the finishing-stroke to my indisposition. Larmechin is very attentive, and has not quitted me night or day.

I read your letters yesterday, my child, with extreme pleasure; they are a delightful conversation: I desire you will not pretend to tell me that your success in Provence is a matter of indifference to you; I know not what is pleasing, if so complete a victory is not; which, at the same time, is attended with the most agreeable and honourable consequences on your side. I had the pleasure of hearing this agreeable intelligence a little before you; and the Assembly of the noblesse has completed my satisfaction: I send you M. de Pomponne's letter; I think nothing can exceed his friendship. D'Hacqueville writes me word that our Cardinal has an inflammation on his lungs: I am much more uneasy about him than myself. I would, with

great pleasure, write you twenty or thirty pages, but it is really more than I can do at present. My son shall fill up the rest. Adieu, my dearest child, I embrace you to-day with my right hand.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*
(Enclosed in his Mother's letter.)

You see, my dear sister, by what my mother writes, the true state of her health, and how little reason there is to be alarmed at her present disorder, which begins to go off, and to be relieved by gentle sweats; her sufferings were so great, that it cut us to the soul to witness them. I hope you do me the justice to believe, that I do all in my power to assist and amuse her. I heartily wish I could be of any real service, but unfortunately, I am good for nothing, unless for having brought Larmechin, who doe' wonders day and night. Your letters are very necessary, and very efficacious, in diverting the pains of our dear patient. It is a pity we cannot receive them oftener than once a week. We do not give much credit to your philosophical notions about your affairs in Provence; you may see by M. de Coëtquen's affair, of which I informed you in my last, that yours is not the only Province where there are intrigues and cabals. Is it not too obliging and kind of d'Hacqueville, to write us an account of this affair, from Paris, when we are but seven leagues from Rennes? as if he thought we never heard anything of our own savage country.

You have doubtless heard of the disputes that happened at the nuptials of La Mothe, which were not inferior to those at the marriage of Thétis; for Discord with her snaky locks had insinuated herself amongst our Duchesses and Princesses, who are the goddesses of the earth; but, at length, all is calmed, and there is no more talk of war; those we have at present upon our hands [1] are fully sufficient. We have read the opera; but you never saw

[1] With the Dutch, the Spaniards, and the Germans.

tastes so corrupted as ours are become, since we have been in Brittany. We look upon the Funeral Oration of M. de Tulle as extremely beautiful, and we think the opera[1] this year infinitely superior to any we have had before. As we did not get it till yesterday, we have only read the prologue and the first act, which we honour with our approbation; but pray do not think that we do the same with respect to the continuation of *Pharamond*; we anathematise everything, that is not written by La Calprenède.

Adieu, my dear sister; we endeavour to amuse our good mother as much as possible, which is all that she now stands in need of, for the disorder will take its course, and we do not think she will be quite well for these three weeks. Her fever left her precisely at the seventh day, which plainly shows you there is no danger. Pray do not write us any letters that may make us uneasy, they will come unseasonably, and the vexation of knowing that you have been alarmed for her, will not tend to your dear mother's recovery.

A thousand compliments to M. de Grignan, and to his beard.

LETTER 380

From Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Tuesday, January 21, 1676.

In the first place, my dear sister, let me entreat you, not to alarm yourself at not seeing my mother's handwriting, but firmly believe what is told you by the good Abbé and myself. The swelling in her hands still continues so much, that we do not think it advisable to let them be exposed to the air: and another reason is, that since yesterday, which was the ninth day of her disorder, the inflamed and swelled parts have begun to perspire,

[1] *Atys*, written by Quinault.

which must on no account be checked, as it is the forerunner of health, and the only means of getting the disorder out of her joints. Her fever is gone, and nothing remains but a little pain and much swelling. This is the real situation of our dear little mamma. Do not imagine that any care is wanting, or that any precaution has been neglected. There is a very good physician at Vitré who has bled her in the foot admirably well. She is taken as much care of here as she could have been in Paris, and what is still better, she herself thinks so. In short, we should have nothing now to do but to laugh, could we find an expedient for her to lie in bed at any other person's expense; but as that cannot be done, it is somewhat inconvenient to her. The disorder has been more severe and painful, than any she ever experienced; but as it is become a kind of necessity to be ill this year, it is infinitely better for her to have had the rheumatism with all its inconveniences, than one of those inflammations that have been so prevalent; especially as we are in a country where it is next to an impossibility to be bled in the arm with any degree of safety. In short, we have every day consolation in our sorrow, and we almost feel greater pleasure in seeing her hands packed up in flannels, and in being unable to stand, than in seeing her walk in her avenues, and hearing her sing from morning to night. The little girl who is with us, when she saw my mother's pain increase towards evening, used constantly to burst into tears. She is the object of du Plessis' unceasing jealousy, who makes no small merit with my mother of hating her like the devil.

I must tell you a droll adventure that happened today: my mother was fallen into a little doze in her bed; the Abbé, the little girl, and myself, were sitting round the fire; du Plessis came in, we made signs to her to walk softly, which, to give her her due, she obeyed very punctually; but she scarcely got to the middle of the room, when my mother waked, coughing, and called for her handkerchief; the little girl and I got up to give it her, but du Plessis was beforehand with us, and running to the

bed-side, in the hurry of her zeal, instead of applying it to my mother's mouth, pinched her nose so hard that she made her cry out violently; my mother snuffled out her dislike of her officious zeal, and then we all fell a-laughing, as you must have done, had you witnessed the scene.

Adieu, my dearest sister; be in no uneasiness or alarm at what is going on here: before this letter reaches you my mother will have been to take the air a little in the garden; if anything extraordinary should happen between this time and to-morrow, you shall know it before I close my packet. But the delight is, that nothing can now happen, but for the better. I heartily embrace M. de Grignan.

LETTER 381

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Monday, January 27, 1676.

My hands still continue to be swollen, my dear child, but that is a certain sign of the departure of the rheumatism, which has always been losing ground since the crisis we mentioned to you.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *writes to his Sister from his Mother's dictation.*

It is true, the grand perspiration, and some trifling ones since, have completely carried off the fever and the pain, and I have now nothing to complain of but weakness: but I was obliged to lie in bed for a fortnight without being able to turn. I am now settled very comfortably in my little alcove. I wish your brother was not my amanuensis, that I might tell you all he has done for me on this occasion. My disorder has been very general in this neighbourhood, never failing to attack those who escaped the inflammation on the lungs: but to tell you the truth,

I did not consider myself as subject to this common law, and never was poor woman more humbled, nor treated more against her inclination. Had I made a proper use of this affliction, it might possibly have turned to my advantage; but I am impatient, my dear child, and cannot conceive how people can live without legs, arms, or hands. You must excuse this letter, my dear, as coming from a sick person: when I next write to you, I hope to write like other people. I thought when I was ill with the fever, that I heard them say, Cardinal Grimaldi [1] was dead; if it is so, I shall be very sorry. Adieu, my dearest child, I only want to recruit my strength, and to abate the swelling. I embrace M. de Grignan. The Princesse has behaved with great attention to me during my illness.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*

(Enclosed in his Mother's letter.)

I have nothing left to say to you, my dear sister, except that the Abbé and I have had a dispute. He asserted that a line or two in my mother's own hand, however badly written, were absolutely necessary towards making you quite easy; I, on the contrary, maintained that they were more likely to increase your fright; and that you would have always done us the honour to confide in what we told you about her health, and that our accounts would perfectly have removed your uneasiness: this is my opinion, for I never can suppose that you would consider me so hardened or insensible, as to write in a jocose strain, at a time when I saw myself threatened with the most dreadful of all calamities. Pray let us have your opinion to decide the dispute.

I salute M. de Grignan, and kiss *La Dague's* forehead.

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[1] Jérôme de Grimaldi, Archbishop of Aix, died Cardinal dean the fourth of November 1685, aged 90, extremely regretted by his whole diocese, especially by the poor, to whom he was a constant and noble benefactor.

LETTER 382

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *writes to his Sister from his Mother's dictation.*

The Rocks, Wednesday, January 29, 1676.

You will think it very odd, my child, when I tell you that I am quite cured, that I have neither fever nor pain, and yet do not write to you: but the very reason of this is, because I am cured. My pains are turned to a swelling; so that my poor hand is not capable even of scrawling, as it has done for some days past. But this is an inconvenience that will not last long. I have now nothing left to do but to comfort myself for the uneasiness my bed has given me for this fortnight past. I begin to walk about my room, I recover my strength: this is a delightful condition, compared with my former one, and therefore I entreat you to be under no uneasiness on my account, while we think ourselves so happy.

I have read your two letters, they are divine; you give me admirable accounts; if ever my hand is at liberty again, I will certainly answer them; in the meantime, be assured that I lose nothing either in point of correspondence or friendship. One of the greatest pleasures I had in my recovery, was the thought of its relieving you from the uneasiness you endured, which now you ought to throw entirely aside, since we have told you the real truth, and that I am now on the high road to health. I embrace you, my dearest child, from the bottom of my heart; the *worthy*[1] does the same;—and as to me, my dear sister[2], you will believe I am not behindhand. I have nothing to say to you to-day, for myself, except that I am very happy that we are so well out of this affair.

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[1] The Abbé de Coulanges.

[2] This is written by M. de Sévigné as from himself.

LETTER 383

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Friday, January 31, 1676.

Be under no concern about me, my dear child; I am perfectly well, except that my hands and feet are violently swollen, and that I am unable to assist myself; but this inconvenience, which is inconceivable, will soon, I am told, go off. I have been a thousand times more comfortable here than I should have been in Paris; I am waited upon, and treated like a Queen.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*

(Enclosed with the above.)

Oh, what beautiful writing! Do you not think my mother had better not have written to you at all? We wished to prevent her, but she would do it: I hope it will serve to make you more easy; and do you, in return, wish us a little patience to bear with the swelling and weakness that remain. My mother imagined that the instant her pain had left her, she might have played at leap-frog. She is a little disconcerted to find herself so much mistaken. All will go well, if our impatience does not produce any ill effects.

We would have sent a letter of Madame de Vins', which my mother received by the last post; but we put it by so carefully, that it is not to be found. You must be content then to know in general terms that it was a very friendly and civil one. Madame de Vins tells us, that she is convinced the Grignans had reason and justice on their side, in the two last affairs; that she had not written to you, because she was certain you had too much good sense to wish to renew the dispute, when the cause was removed. She adds, that she appeared to interest herself so warmly in favour of the Grignans, as being in the right, that she is suspected by the other party. This is the general pur-

port of the letter, which I suppose we shall find a fortnight or three weeks hence. Such pains were taken not to lose, or mislay it, that it has certainly been put into some safe corner, where nobody might get at it, and we cannot get at it ourselves. Adieu, my little sister.

LETTER 384

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *writes to his Sister from his Mother's dictation.*

The Rocks, Sunday, February 2, 1676.

My dearest child, we have read your last two letters with a joy and satisfaction, that nothing else could produce; but we dread those we are next to receive, in which you will exclaim upon my illness, and charge it to my own account, and that will not be doing me justice; for every creature, in this country, has had rheumatism, or inflammations; take your choice. Madame de Marbeuf has been dangerously ill these six weeks; so you see, my dear, we must pay the tribute one way or other: and as to your frights and uneasinesses, they begin precisely at the instant they should end; for I am now free from pain, and fever, and have nothing left of my rheumatism, but a little swelling in my hands. I can complete my cure by the exercise of walking, and recover all I lost during my confinement to my bed. I have suffered some inconvenience, my dear, but nothing that can be called danger. I think of nothing now but gaining strength, and returning to Paris, from whence I shall let you know how matters go on.

I cannot write to you to-day, my right hand being so much swelled; the swelling in my left is considerably abated, and the skin looks wrinkled; we are delighted to see it so. I assure you the rheumatism is one of the finest pieces in the world: I have a very great respect for it. It has its beginning, increase, crisis, and end. Thank heaven, I am at present in the latter stage.

I think I have represented Madame de Vins, and her brother-in-law, in a very satisfactory light to you; it is one in which they appear to me. They did not choose to seem what they really are; they have their reasons for it; and we certainly ought to allow our friends to serve us in the way they think best. I think they have managed matters very circumspectly, with regard to Provence; this should be the rule of our conduct, which is so much the more easy to be observed, as they have drawn aside the curtain to me a little, and I assure you the prospect is delightful for you. They have both written to me on hearing of my illness, which is very obliging; I send their letters; keep all my little secrets, and let us both be careful how we complain of those whom we have the greatest reason to commend.

I pretty well guess what a noise and bustle you have in your rotunda [1]. Send me word whether the good Sannes plays at piquet still, and whether he thinks himself alive: we must amuse ourselves while we can. If you were as fond of dancing as your daughter is, I should not pity you. I never saw a girl naturally so fond of it. I am quite of your opinion respecting the *Moral Essays*. I scold your brother, but here he comes to speak for himself.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*

(*Enclosed in his Mother's Letter.*)

And I say, that the first volume of the *Moral Essays* would appear to you in the same light as it does to me, if La Marans, and the Abbé Têtu, had not accustomed you to such subtle and abstracted distinctions. The most intricate stuff imaginable now appears clear and easy to you. Of all the things that were ever written on man, and the interior of man, I never met with anything I liked so little as this: the strokes and descriptions are above the reach of every common capacity. Pascal, the logician of

[1] A little drawing-room, so called, because it was made in an old round tower belonging to the palace of the county of Provence, where M. de Grignan resided when at Aix.

Port-Royal, Plutarch, and Montaigne, write in a very different style. This writer argues for the sake of arguing, and, sometimes too, has very little to say. I maintain also, that the first two acts of the opera are very good, and above the usual flight of Quinault: my mother agrees with me in this; but she intends to give you her opinion herself. Only let us know what you find fault with in it; we will answer for these first two acts; as for the assembly of the rivers, I give it up.

LETTER 385

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *writes to his Sister from his Mother's dictation.*

The Rocks, Monday, February 3, 1676.

Guess, my dear child, what it is that comes the quickest, and goes off the slowest; that brings you the nearest to health, and removes you the farthest from it; that throws you into the most agreeable situation imaginable, and at the same time hinders you from enjoying it; that flatters you with the most pleasing hopes, and keeps you the longest from the accomplishment of them. Cannot you guess? Do you give it up? Why, it is the rheumatism. I have had it these three and twenty days; since the fourteenth day, I have been free from fever and pain: and in this delightful situation, thinking myself strong enough to walk, which is the summit of my wishes; I find myself swollen all over, feet, legs, hands, arms; and this swelling, which they call my cure, and in reality is so, is the sole occasion of my present vexation; were I good for anything, I might gain myself some credit by it. However, I believe the enemy is conquered, and that in two days I shall be able to walk. Larmechin gives me great hope of this. I every day receive letters from our friends in Paris, congratulating me on my recovery. I have taken M. de Lorme's opening powders, which have been of great service to

me; I am going to take them again; they are a never-failing remedy in these cases. After this attack, I am promised an eternal succession of health. God grant it. My first step will be to return to Paris; I desire you, therefore, my dear, to calm all your fears: you see what a faithful account we have given you of the affair; let that make you easy.

Before this packet is sealed up, I shall venture to ask my great hand if it will please to write a line to you; I am afraid it will not comply; but I do not know; perhaps in two hours it may.

Adieu, my dear and best-beloved child; let me beg you to have a reverential awe of the thing called rheumatism; this, methinks, is the most important business I have to recommend to you at present. The *frater* has been railing at you this week past for speaking against M. de Lorme's powders when you were in Paris.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*

(Enclosed in his Mother's Letter.)

Had my mother yielded to the regimen prescribed her by that honest man, and taken some of his powders once a month, as he wished her to do, she would not have had this disorder, which is wholly owing to repletion of humours: but it was killing her to advise her to try a single dose; and yet, after all, this dreadful medicine, that makes people shudder at its very name, is composed of antimony, which is an emetic; and operates as gently, and with as much safety, as a glass of any of the medicinal waters, without the least griping or pain, and has no other effect than that of making the head light, and capacitating it for making verses, if you choose to attempt it: but, no, it must not be taken: "Are you mad, brother, to think of giving my mother antimony? she wants nothing but a little dieting, and a cooling medicine occasionally:" this was your Ladyship's strain. Your servant, my little sister; I am quite angry, when I think that we might have saved

our mother this terrible disorder, by prevailing on her to have taken this powder, which is the most speedy restorative in the world, whatever she may be pleased to say against it in her impatience.

"Are you fools, children," says my mother, "to think, that a disease is to be put out of its course? Must not the will of God be done? Is it not our duty to submit?" This is talking like a very good Christian; but still, I say, give me de Lorme's powders.

LETTER 386

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *writes to his Sister from his Mother's dictation.*

The Rocks, Sunday, February 9, 1676.

This is just what we feared and foresaw; you are tormented with uneasiness when I am getting well. I very much dreaded the effect which the news of my being ill would have on you; knowing you as I do: but you now see what it has proved; there never was the least danger. We never intended to deceive you from the beginning; I told you I had a stiff neck, and I thought it was nothing more: but the next morning it declared itself the rheumatism in form: that is to say, one of the most painful and tiresome disorders in the world; and now that I am cured, and can walk about my room, and have been at mass, I am covered with poultices. I guess with what impatience you waited for our second letter, and I cannot sufficiently express my obligations to M. de Roquesante for partaking of your uneasiness. You are all heroes in friendship, of whom I have the highest opinion. I thank the dear children for thanking God so heartily for my recovery, and I promise M. de Grignan two lines in my own hand, as soon as I have got rid of my poultices. I desire you will return my thanks to all those who have been so particular in their inquiries after me; for though I am sen-

sible it is on your account, it cannot fail to be highly gratifying to me. I am in great fear lest your brother should be obliged to leave me; all his letters from Paris are filled with reviews, brigades, and war.

I entreat you to be careful of your health: you know you cannot give me a stronger proof of your friendship. Adieu, my dearest child, I embrace you most tenderly. The *frater* wishes to write a line to M. de Grignan.

M. DE SÉVIGNÉ *writes to Monsieur* DE GRIGNAN.

(*Enclosed in Madame* DE SÉVIGNÉ'S *Letter.*)

Though my sister may have taken the greatest care imaginable to conceal from you my mother's situation, you may depend on it, my dearest brother, that I should have been very cautious how I wrote to her, had we perceived anything of danger in the case; but happily we had only the vexation of seeing her racked with excruciating pains, without the least ground for apprehension. This you might easily perceive by our letters, which were calculated to make you quite easy on that head. I hope you are persuaded, my dear brother, that I should not have been wanting in my duty on this occasion. My sister has too strong a hold of my heart for me ever to forget her. At present we have the satisfaction of witnessing an hourly change for the better, in my mother's health; and I am less concerned at her illness, as I hope it may be a means of inducing her to take more care of herself for the future, finding herself mortal; and as I am indebted to it for your obliging and friendly letter. Believe me, Sir, no one can honour you more sincerely than myself, or feel for you greater esteem and affection.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*

(*Enclosed in his Mother's letter.*)

And now, a word for you, my dear sister, to inform you of what you desired to know by the first post, which, however, could not be done, unless we had been like my

uncle de Châlons's [1] valet, who wrote word that his master had had a quartan ague ever since yesterday morning. You were informed of all there was to be informed of, and I think you ought rather to return us thanks, than scold us, for in that you do us great injustice.

We have the Abbé de Chavigni for our Bishop of Rennes [2]: this you will suppose does not greatly displease us, laying aside his dislike to Montaigne. I embrace you a thousand times, my dearest sister, and desire you to make M. de Grignan my further respects: I have at length seen a letter from him to another person besides yourself, which I shall preserve very carefully.

LETTER 387

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, February 12, 1676.

My dear child, I am now wholly out of the question of anxiety. I am quite well: that is to say, as well as a person can be at the skirts of the rheumatism; for the swellings are so long in going away, that there would be no keeping our patience, if it were not that the situation we have just quitted, makes the present seem a heavenly one in comparison. Is it true that the Chevalier has been in the same dilemma? I cannot conceive how the *petit glorieux* can bear a disorder, that begins to exercise its power over its captive by tying him hand and foot. It is said too, that Cardinal de Bouillon has had his share of this little humiliation: oh, noble disorder! it does well, to let the courtiers feel its sting. My son is gone to Vitré on some business: I have, therefore, conferred the post of secretary on the little person whom I have so often mentioned to you, and who desires most respectfully to kiss your hands. I enclose a letter which the good Princesse

[1] Jacques de Neuchèse, Bishop of Châlons-sur-Saône.

[2] This was a false report.

has just sent me for you. I am very much pleased at this mark of her politeness and friendship. I am under no concern about the manner in which you will answer it.

LETTER 388

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *writes to his Sister from his Mother's dictation.*

The Rocks, Sunday, February 16, 1676.

Since you decide the question, that it is better to be without the writing of a person whom we love, than to see them write badly; I think I will not propose any thing of the kind to my poor swelled hand to-day, but entreat you, by proxy, to banish all uneasiness from your mind. My son made me walk out a little yesterday, in the finest weather imaginable; I found myself greatly strengthened by it, and if my swellings would but leave me, I should be in perfect health. As I dearly love to be made much of, I am not displeased at your pitying, and joining with me in the persuasion, that the rheumatism, as I have had it, is the most cruel and tormenting pain a person can endure. The *frater* has been an excellent nurse to me; he is equally useful in sickness and in health. I placed the greatest reliance on all he said; he commiserated all my sufferings, and has not failed in anything he promised me; no, not so much as in yesterday's walk, which has done me a great deal of good. Larmechin, on his part, constantly attended me for upwards of five weeks: in short, I do not know what I should have done without these two good personages. If you want any more anecdotes relating to the rheumatism, inquire of poor Marignane, whom I pity from my heart, for she is in the very situation from which I am just recovering. Do not imagine that the head-dress and the toupée, that you reproach me with, have lately been in fashion. I have been seriously ill for the first time in my

life, and my first attempt has been a master-piece. I now wait for more strength, and shall then set out for Paris, whither, to my great regret, my poor boy must go before me. I am greatly affected with the devotion observed at Arles, but I fancy the Coadjutor never suffers his to carry him such lengths: we are eager to learn from you the consequences of this extraordinary zeal.

I am very glad you have had a little insight into M. de Pomponne's and his sister-in-law's proceedings, and that you have adopted their plans, without letting it be perceived at Paris: they are friends on whom we may safely rely. Adieu, my dear child, I think this is all I have to say to you. If it were not for my being a little anxious about you and your health, I should be in an enviable situation. But it is not for wretched mortals to taste happiness unalloyed.

LETTER 389

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Ash-Wednesday, February 19, 1676.

I hope, my dear, you passed your carnival better than I did; I see nothing to have prevented your doing it: you have long had reason to be out of pain on the subject of my health. I am a little discomposed by it at present, indeed, for the insupportable tediousness of a rheumatic attack is beyond conception; now a pain in one hand, then a twitch in t'other, as if to remind you of the beginning of the fit: in short, it is no easy matter to recover afterwards perfect health; but I set very seriously about it, and there is no fear of my relapsing, through my own fault, for I am afraid of my own shadow; so much so, that they make a perfect jest of me. I am accordingly what you may call a very disagreeable companion. Add to this that the good Abbé is not very well: he has a pain in one of his

knees, with depression of spirits towards the evening, that I do not at all like.

Madame de Marbeuf came from Rennes to see me, but I sent her to the Princesse to spend her carnival; I expect them both here to see me. My son has passed two or three days there. He is to leave us in five or six; this will be a real loss to me, but he cannot possibly delay his departure: I shall think of nothing but following him as soon as possible. But, my dear child, what is to cure me of the uneasiness I suffer on your account? this is extreme indeed, and I every day pray to be relieved from it. I do not know when my letters will be bearable again; at present they are so dull and full of myself, that I have not patience to hear them read; your taste is too good not to make you think the same, and so I will conclude immediately; the little girl [1] also laughs at me. I expect your letters as the only joy of my heart. It is a pleasure to me to enter into all you write, and to extricate myself from what I write myself. Adieu, my dearest and ever lovely child, you know how much I am yours: preserve for me a friendship so tender and so dear. I embrace M. de Grignan and the little ones. How does poor Marignane? methinks the rheumatism makes us neighbours. I send you a dozen remembrances to distribute as you think proper; but there is none for Roquesante, which must never be confounded with the rest.

LETTER 390

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, February 23, 1676.

You are brought to bed at the end of eight months, my dear child: what a happiness you are so well! but what a pity it will be to lose your little boy! You, who are so prudent, and apt to condemn others for want of care, must

[1] The young lady who was writing for Madame de Sévigné.

take it in your head to wash your feet! when you had carried the good work on so well, and for so long a time, how could you think of risking it, and your life into the bargain? but after all, God be praised, my child, that you have got so well over it; you wanted no help. You may imagine with what impatience I wait for a second packet, to hear more particularly of your health, and how full my head will be of this lying-in and all its circumstances. I thank you for your three lines, and you, my dear Comte, for the trouble you took in giving me so speedy and accurate an account. You know what the health of your dear wife is to me: but you let her write too much. And so it was this same washing of the feet, it seems, that brought on the labour. I cannot get over the loss of the poor infant, and I stand in need of all your Christian reflections to support me; for, say as you please, you will never be able to save its life at eight months. I should have been afraid her premature labour had been occasioned by the alarm she was under on account of my illness, had I not known there was a fortnight's interval. However, God be praised a thousand and a thousand times, since my dear Comtesse is well. My life hangs upon her health, therefore let me recommend it to your particular care, my dear Comte, and I accept very heartily of the rendezvous at Grignan.

LETTER 391

From Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, February 23, 1676.

Come on, sister, come on, give us some of your sage advice for the management of health, and then we will answer you out of the Bible, "Physician, heal thyself." I take no small advantage over you now I think, for by my good management, simple as I am, our people have taken the field. In a word, my mother is as well as pos-

sible: yesterday, for the first time, she took de Lorme's powders, which did her great service; she walks out in fine weather; I gave her my advice, and she follows it: she finds the benefit of so doing, for with us people do not lie-in at the end of eight months! After this, I fancy she will trust to me in what relates to her health, and have a proper contempt for your little capacity, that suffered you to wash your feet for two hours together, when you were eight months with child: we forgive you, however, in consideration of your being tolerably well, and of the letters which we have received from you, M. de Grignan, and the little *Dague,* which take away all our uneasiness.

Cautious as you were in giving us this intelligence, my mother was affected with it in a degree that alarmed us a good deal. We were at cards when the packet was brought; she desired du Plessis, who sat looking on, to open it. The first letter she saw was that of *La Dague* to me. When she read the word *delivered,* which happened to be the first that presented itself on the outside fold, my mother gave a great cry, without staying for the rest of the contents, which were as happy as could be wished, and immediately relieved us from any inquietude. She was, however, very much agitated, but this proceeded merely from the weakness which the disorder has left upon her spirits: indeed there was some reason to be alarmed at first, but when we saw *La Dague's* drollery, all our anxiety vanished. But my mother still wanted to see your own handwriting.

I beg M. de Grignan to accept my congratulations on your health, and my sincere wishes for the life of his son: he will not doubt my sincerity, if he will only do me the honour to judge of me by himself, and recollect how far short this falls of the tears he favoured me with about eighteen months ago, upon a certain piece of news from the camp: as to *La Dague,* I shall say nothing to her at present; I shall wait for an opportunity of revenge, till I can hide myself on the staircase at Grignan, where the wind has such a fine effect.

I embrace you a thousand times, my dearest sister. There is no danger to-day, for it is a long time since I put any powder in my hair.

LETTER 392

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, February 26, 1676.

I wait with the utmost impatience, my dear child, for my Friday's letters: I am still in need of that pleasing confirmation of a health so dear and precious to me: I embrace you tenderly, and my little secretary shall tell you the rest.

I make no further mention of my own health, as it is now perfectly established, with the exception of my hands, which are still swollen. Could I write with my feet, you should soon have long letters from me: in the meantime, laying aside all thoughts of sickness, I am wholly taken up with the news I received from Provence, which is of importance enough to arrest my attention, but, provided you still continue in good health, I have reason to be thankful. The weather is unusually fine, and contributes greatly to recruit my strength, and hasten my return to Paris.

I am told that the Prince has excused himself from serving in the ensuing campaign: I think he is perfectly right. M. de Lorges is at length a Maréchal of France: do you not wonder, when you reflect how easily he might have been advanced to this honour six or seven months ago? The letters I receive are filled with nothing but the return of M. and Madame de Schomberg; I think he will go to Germany. Everybody fancies I am able to ride out now. I have heard of your safe delivery. It is certainly a great step towards recovery to have the mind at ease: however, I am in hopes of having mine still more so, after another packet of letters from you.

Adieu, my dearest, my best-beloved: my son is going to Paris, in order to put the finishing stroke to a miraculous affair which La Garde has entered into with young Viriville, relative to the purchase of our guidonage. I love La Garde sincerely, and request you to do the same, and also to write to him in return for the obligations I owe him. The good Marbeuf is here, and is an inexpressible comfort to me.

LETTER 393

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, March 1, 1676.

Let me tell you, my child, how fortunate and happy I am. I fully expected letters from you on Friday, as they never fail me on that day: I had been a whole week in painful expectation: the packet came, I opened it, but found no letter from you: I thought I should have fainted, not having yet sufficient strength to support such a disappointment. Alas! what would have become of my recovering health, with such an anxiety as this to endure? how could I have passed the tedious moments till Monday? But see what services d'Hacqueville is destined to render me! for in doing a thing that might have been perfectly useless if I had received your letters as usual, he restored me to life and health by sending me the letter he had received from Davonneau of the nineteenth February, the tenth day after your confinement, written at your request, and giving an account of yours and your child's perfect health. What comfort was this in a moment! how instantaneously did I pass from the extremes of grief and trouble, to a well-founded and rational tranquillity! I expect my wandering packet next Monday; ah! cruel packet, to wander the day of all others that I most earnestly wished for you! but that charming letter of the nineteenth has set my

heart at ease, and I shall now return to the care of my health, which I had begun to abandon. I am well, but my poor hand is tired, and I must now have recourse to my little secretary.

To return to d'Hacqueville. I will henceforward take care how I condemn him for his excessive carefulness, since it has been so beneficial to me. I must own that had I received my two letters as regularly as I ought, I should have laughed heartily at this over-precaution, as I do when he sends me news of Brittany; but no more laughing since the last unspeakable satisfaction which he has afforded me.

My son is gone, and we are solitary enough without him. The little girl and I sit together and read, and write, and say our prayers. I am carried out in my chair into the park, which is delightfully pleasant this fine weather, and strengthens me exceedingly. I have had a great many pretty alterations made in it, which I shall not much enjoy this year, for my face is turned towards Paris; my son is there already, about the affair of the guidonage. The good Princesse visits me sometimes, and seems to take great interest in your health. La Marbeuf is gone away; she was a great comfort and assistance to me, in that amiable disorder of mine, the rheumatism. Adieu, my beloved child. I heartily thank M. Davonneau for his letter of the nineteenth February.

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*LETTER 394

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to the Comte* DE BUSSY.

The Rocks, March 1, 1676.

What must you have thought of me, my dear cousin, for having failed to answer your excellent letter, which I received more than six weeks ago? The reason is this: it is seven weeks to-day that my robust health was attacked by an inhuman rheumatism, which has not yet left me; for

my hands are still swollen, and I cannot write. I had a constant fever for three weeks. Your letter was read to me, and your arguments appeared very just; but my head was so confused with the delirium occasioned by my fever, that it was impossible for me to answer it. All I know is that I sent your letter to my daughter, and that I have thought of you a thousand times since I have been ill. This was not a trifle, considering how much I was occupied with myself. It is a strange noviciate for one who has passed her life, like me, in perfect health. This illness has delayed my return to Paris, where I shall go, however, as soon as I have regained my strength.

M. de Lorges has been created Maréchal of France. I have a thousand things to say to you; and I would willingly say them, if I were not obliged to employ an amanuensis. But the account of my illness must suffice, my dear cousin, for to-day. I embrace Madame de Coligny with all my heart; and entreat her not to bring forth an eight months' child, as my daughter has done. She is well; but she will perhaps lose her little boy, and that is a pity. My dear cousin, adieu.

LETTER 395

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, March 4, 1676.

At length, my dear, I have received the two letters I so earnestly expected and desired. I am delighted to hear of your health, but do not fatigue yourself so early with too much writing. I thank M. de Grignan and Montgobert for having prevented you from doing it: besides I do not deserve it, for I am still without hands. I only request an answer for the Princesse, and two lines for myself. I am really wearied out with this tedious disorder, and shocked at the thoughts of returning lame to Paris. I have put my physician here upon his mettle, and have like-

wise written to my son to consult some able person of the faculty in Paris, to know if any thing can be done to hasten a cure, after suffering for two months continually. Let me know how Marignane does, and whether she labours under the same inconvenience as myself. I am charmed to hear the little boy is well; but I dare not set my heart too much upon him, because I dare not hope that you should be deceived in your conjectures, knowing you to be more infallible than the Pope himself: I build all my expectations, therefore, on the old women's tales that were told you at Aix: I think some of them very droll, and the rarity of nine months' children made me laugh very heartily.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to Monsieur* DE GRIGNAN.

You say, my dear Comte, that my daughter cannot lie-in too often, because she does it so well. Good God! is she not always lying-in? But let me tell you, Sir, that unless from compassion and affection you give her a little rest, you will entirely destroy her, and that would be a pity. Let me desire you to reflect seriously on what I say to you; which, believe me, is no gossip's tale.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *continues and concludes her letter to her Daughter.*

I now return to you, my dearest. I suppose you are delighted to see the Coadjutor and La Garde. Is not the latter to return to Court? We shall see how the affair he brought forward will turn out: we are afraid it is rather too good to succeed. I hear from Paris that the Chevalier is very much displeased at not being made Brigadier; he is in the right; after his conduct last year [1], he certainly deserves to be promoted. Adieu, my dearest child, the good Abbé embraces you, and my little secretary kisses your left hand. My hand still continues as usual; but you are well, and then I am so too.

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[1] At the battle of Altenheim.

LETTER 396

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, March 8, 1676.

You may indeed believe, my child, that if my hand could write to anyone, it would be to you; but it is in vain to propose it: it will not obey me. This tedious privation afflicts me. I have not written a line to Paris, except to d'Hacqueville the other day, to thank him for Davonneau's letter, with which I was transported with joy; and this was on your account, for I think of no one else at present. I reserve my scrawl entirely for you, and notwithstanding your decision of the question, I believe you had rather see that than none at all: the rest therefore must excuse me:

> Car je n'ai qu'un filet de voix,
> Et ne chante que pour Sylvie [1].

But here comes my pretty little secretary very opportunely to relieve my trembling hand.

You are very good, my child, in offering to come and spend the summer with me; I firmly believe you would do as you say, and were it not for the little uneasiness I still suffer, I should very contentedly see our good Abbé set out by himself, a fortnight hence, and remain in this delightful desert, with so sweet a companion the whole summer; but M. de Mirepoix's affair decides me, and I must now hobble to Paris. When I was at the worst, I said no one was more likely than yourself, if you knew how ill I was, to come and surprise me some morning at the foot of my bed. You see, my dear, what an opinion I have of your affection, and what confidence I repose in you.

[1] For I have but a weak voice, and I sing only for Sylvia. [Translation.]

I assure you, my dear, I am so much delighted with the good state of your health, that it encourages me to endeavour to perfect mine; but for this pleasing stimulus, I should have been wholly indifferent about it: but I foresee so many things which may give me the pleasure of seeing, and of serving you, that I do not hesitate to bestow all my attention on the re-establishment of my health. I am interested in the life of the little boy: I should be very sorry if he were to die. You have given me a charming picture of Vardes; you want no assistant, for your pencil is not inferior to Mignard's. I should have thought from his (Vardes) confusion, that he was going to be put upon the wheel; but I now see, as no one was present but you, that he owed the honour of this embarrassment to his being eleven years in the country. I think Cardinal de Bonzi has no reason to complain, if that be all that is said of him. I am sorry the good Sannes is dead; it was a pleasure to see him play at piquet, as coldly and as drily as if he had been really in his coffin.

I am very desirous that you should write to the good Princesse; I am afraid you did not sufficiently enter into the friendliness of her letters. Let me know how you are after your sitting up: is your complexion uninjured? I love to hear about your person: my face within this fortnight is the same as ever it was; I am very little fallen away, and I walk upon my *hind feet* like other people. I eat with an appetite, but have bid adieu to suppers for ever; so that excepting my swollen hands, a few flying pains that come and go, and serve to remind me of my dear rheumatism, I am no longer an object worthy of your solicitude. Feel no more anxiety then upon my account, I conjure you, and be assured, that in whatever state I may be, and however I may have been, your remembrance and your love are my sole occupations.

I have just received a letter from the Cardinal, who assures me that he is much better; his health is very dear to me. I have likewise received a thousand congratulations from the dear Grignans. The Chevalier had every

reason to expect promotion, after his conversation with the King. Adieu, my dearest; be under no apprehension of a relapse on my part. My excessive carelessness with respect to my health is changed to the greatest timidity. Do you not pity poor Lauzun for not being able to work at his hole[1] any longer? Do you not think he will dash his brains out against the wall? I am still as much delighted as ever with the *Moral Essays,* and you were mistaken in supposing that the sentiments of a certain person would make me alter mine. The *Treatise on tempting God,* presses us a little to do for our salvation what we often do out of self-love. Corbinelli says, "that our friends are Jesuits in this respect." I think the Coadjutor and you are admirable on this subject: if you said your prayers every day, you would be perfect saints; but you will not; and this is an example of that stubborn will, which St. Augustine describes so well in his *Confessions.* I admire, my dear, how far my love of talking has carried me.

LETTER 397

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, March 11, 1676.

I use a wash for my hands, which old de Lorme has recommended me; it has given me hopes, and that is all; and I pity Lauzun for being deprived of the pleasure of making a hole in the wall. In short, my child, I may say I am well. I took the precaution of being careful of my feet, and it is fortunate I did, for they have saved my life: I am every day in my woods, where there is now a perfect summer; but about five o'clock, I am obliged to leave them, at which I could almost cry: it is a mortification I cannot easily brook. I am in hopes of setting out

[1] M. de Lauzun was discovered attempting to make a hole in the wall of the room where he was confined at Pignerol.

next week: and if I had not courage enough to go, the Abbé would certainly go without me. I have heard no news yet from my son about his affairs: he has thought of nothing but de Lorme, and my health. Is he not a good creature? I expect that your letters next Friday will be accompanied by an answer for the Princesse.

One of the greatest pleasures I enjoy is that of hearing from you: methinks I can never know enough of what relates to you; but you always cut short the subject when you are speaking of yourself, which is not the way to treat those who love you so well. Send me word if the little girl is at Sainte Marie: though my maternal love be of the first magnitude, I do not forget the pigeons. I have a whole cart-load of news from Paris; one sends me a wonderful prophecy of Nostradamus; another a story of a surprising battle of birds in the air, which, after having continued for some time, left two and twenty thousand dead upon the place. "When the sky falls we shall have larks in plenty." Of all this, we do not believe a single syllable here.

Adieu, my dearest child. Be assured, that of all the hearts over which you reign, your empire is established in none so firmly as in mine.

LETTER 398

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, March 14, 1676.

I am grieved at the uneasiness I eternally occasion you: how many unnecessary pains do we suffer in absence! our joy and our sorrow are always misplaced. Fear not, my child, that I shall employ my hands improperly; I only write to you, and even now I can proceed no further. Here comes my little amanuensis.

I still continue de Lorme's wash, but the cure goes on

so slowly, that I have much more hope from the fine weather, than from all the herbs in creation. In other respects, I find myself so well, that I am resolved to set out next Saturday for Paris, where there are a thousand things waiting my presence; the affair of Mirepoix in particular. I will not retrace all I have suffered during my illness, though it seems to me impossible to experience more acute pain. I endeavoured to be patient, but I could not help sometimes crying out. Let us drop the subject, my dear child: I am now well, and let my present timidity be an earnest of my future wisdom. You would laugh to see what a chicken-hearted creature I am become: looking at my watch every now and then, and thinking five o'clock a very late hour. I am really surprised at the little one's continuing in such good health; it will be a miracle if he can be reared.

What you say of Vardes is excellent: I know how he dreads your epigrams; it is too much to have both you, and his own conscience, against him at once. I am in hopes the *frater's* affair will terminate to our wishes. He will get the Ensigncy for eleven thousand francs: I do not see how he could have done better, for M. de Viriville will be always ready to take the position off his hands whenever he is weary of it. I felt very keenly the mortification of the Chevalier (de Grignan), and think with you, that there were a thousand reasons for complying with his request. The Duc de Sault, after a long conversation with the King, has quitted the service, and will attend His Majesty as a volunteer. You see we have not a few malcontents.

I could have wished, my dear, you had not been so remiss in answering the good Princesse's letter, but had given her an earlier proof of your sense of the gratitude I owe her. You are in child-bed, it is true, and I have made the most of so reasonable an excuse. I am delighted you are well, and fat, or, in another word, handsome. Yesterday I took M. de Lorme's powder again; it is an admirable medicine: he may well call it *le bon pain* (good

bread), for it does everything I could wish; and neither heats nor disorders me at all. I am now perfectly reconciled to it: I fancy this last dose will complete my cure. In this country, they never bleed in rheumatisms: God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb; of all the disorders that could have befallen me, I have had the least dangerous, but the most painful one, and the most calculated to correct my pride, and make me humble: for I would now run a thousand miles to avoid the pain I endured; but you, my dear, notwithstanding you have suffered so much, possess much greater courage and fortitude than I do: may your noble soul long remain in union with your lovely body!

LETTER 398[A]

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, March 18, 1676.

I am resolved not to strain my hand, and my little secretary is coming to my aid.

In the first place, my dear child, I have to inform you, that when I no longer knew what to do with my hands, Providence sent M. de Villebrune to me, who is an excellent physician; he advised me to excite perspiration in them, by holding them over the steam of several curious herbs; I am persuaded this is the best remedy I have yet tried, and that this transpiration must be very efficacious. I shall not set out till Tuesday, on account of the equinox, which Villebrune advised me to pass here; in short, Villebrune is all in all with me now. I fancy the good Princesse will pay a visit to MADAME, on the death of M. de Valois. My son's business is not yet finished.

The marriage of M. de Lorges appears to me very advantageous: I am delighted with the father-in-law's good taste. But what say you to Madame de La Baume, who has obliged the King to send an exempt to take

Mademoiselle de La Tivolière from under her father and mother's care, and placed her with one of her sisters-in-law at Lyons? She is no doubt trying to make a match between her and her son [1]. It is rather odd to tell you the news of Lyons, but I could not help mentioning this affair to you. I have not seen Fléchier's Funeral Oration yet; is it possible it can equal M. de Tulle's? I would cite upon this a verse of Tasso, if I could recollect it.

Adieu, my dearest child, our fine weather continues. I should regret leaving *The Rocks* if I were not an invalid; but as I am in continual dread of the dews, and must therefore pass the fine summer evenings in my chamber, the long days would tire me to death, and so I shall take flight. Good health is necessary to bear solitude and a country life.

I embrace you, my dear Comte; I am so weary of this wretched scrawl of mine, that were it not for alarming you all, I would not write another stroke till my hands were perfectly well. Such a tedious recovery is very mortifying to one whom you know to be not overburdened with patience; but we must submit to the will of God. I am rightly served; I was vain of my own strength; this has taught me how weak I am. Forgive me, my dear child, for always talking of myself, and my complaints; I promise you to be better company when I get to Paris; and that is one reason why I wish to be there, that I may lose the remembrance of my past sufferings. *The Rocks* is the place of all others to nourish melancholy reflections. But I shall hope to see you some day in this *paternò nido* [2].

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[1] Camille de La Baume d'Hostun, Comte de Tallard, afterwards Maréchal of France, and Duc d'Hostun, married Marie-Catharine de Grolée de Viriville-La-Tivolière, as Madame de Sévigné predicted.

[2] Parental nest. [Translation.]

LETTER 399

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, March 22, 1676.

I am in very good health, my dear, but in my rebellious hands there is neither rhyme nor reason. I therefore employ the little girl for the last time: she is the sweetest girl in the world; I know not what I should have done without her; she reads whatever I wish, and you see how she writes; she loves me, is very obliging, and likes to talk of Madame de Grignan: in short, I beg you to love her for my sake.

The LITTLE GIRL *herself writes to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

I should be too happy, Madame, were that the case: I dare say you envy me the pleasure of being constantly about my Lady, your mother: she made me write all this in praise of myself: I am perfectly ashamed of it; and am, at the same time, grieved at the thoughts of her departure.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *continues and concludes her letter to her Daughter.*

My little girl wished to talk to you a little: but now I return to you, my dear child, to tell you, that except my hands, which I do not expect to be well till the weather is warm, you have no reason to say, you could not know me. My face is not altered, my mind and temper are the same as ever: I am a little thinner indeed, but that I am not sorry for: I walk out and take the air, without any discomfort; and the only reason of their sitting up with me is, because I cannot conveniently turn myself yet in my bed; but I sleep like a top. I must own this is a little uncomfortable, and that I find it so, but, my dear,

we must suffer whatever it pleases God to inflict on us; and I may think myself very happy in being so well as I am, for you know what sort of thing a rheumatism is to deal with. As to your question, I will answer you in the words of Medea:

C'est ainsi qu'en partant je vous fais mes adieux [1].

This I have done, and am told that I shall resume my beautiful health. I wish it may be so for your sake, my dear, and the love you bear me: besides, I should not be very unwilling myself to give you this pleasure. The good Princesse has paid me a visit to-day: she inquired if I had heard from you; I wished for your answer, to have given her. The indolence of a country life makes one attentive to these little things. I could not help blushing when this came into my head, and she reddened a little too. I should have been glad if you had discharged that debt a little sooner on my account: she sets off on Wednesday, owing to the death of M. de Valois, and I shall set out on Tuesday, that I may sleep at Laval. I shall not write to you on Wednesday, so do not be uneasy at not hearing from me. But I shall write from Malicorne, where I intend to stay two days to rest myself: I begin already to feel the want of my little secretary.

You imagine that we have bad weather here; we have Provence weather here, but what surprises me is, that you have Brittany weather with you: I supposed yours a thousand times finer, and you supposed ours a thousand times worse than it really is. I have made the most of the season, imagining we may have a return of winter in April or May, which I am accordingly going to pass in Paris. And now, had you but seen me play the sick and delicate lady in my bed-gown, my arm-chair, my pillows, and my night-cap, believe me, you would not have known me again for the person who used to dress so light and airily, without cap, cloak, or bonnet, and who never sat

[1] It is thus in parting I bid you adieu. [Translation.]

upon any thing but a folding chair; but this rheumatism has wrought a total change. I forgot to tell you that our uncle de Sévigné is dead. Madame de La Fayette now inherits her mother's fortune. M. du Plessis-Guénégaud is dead also. You know what is necessary to be done with respect to his wife.

Corbinelli tells me, I lose all my wit and spirit, when I dictate: so that he will correspond with me no longer: I believe he is right; I find my style flat, be you more generous, my dear, and continue to charm me with your entertaining letters. I entreat you to calculate the moons during your pregnancy; if you lie-in a single day after the ninth moon, your infant will live; if not, do not expect a miracle. I shall set out on Tuesday; the roads are as good as in summer, but we have a sharp north-east wind that cuts my poor hands to pieces: I must have hot weather for them, steam is nothing: I am very well otherwise, and it is droll enough to see a woman, who looks well in the face, fed like an infant; but we become used to these inconveniences.

Adieu, my dearest: continue to love me, and receive in return the tenderest attachment that ever united parent to child. I felt our separation during my illness, and often thought, that it would have been a great comfort to have had you with me. I have given orders that your letters may find me at Malicorne. I embrace the Comte, or rather, I desire him to embrace me. I am wholly yours, and so is the good Abbé, who is reckoning and calculating from morning till night, and is not a penny the richer for it, so completely has this Province been fleeced.

LETTER 400

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Laval, Tuesday, March 24, 1676.

And why should I not write to you to-day, if I can? I set out this morning from *The Rocks,* in the most delightful weather: spring is opened in our woods. The little girl was taken away early in the morning to prevent the violent sallies of her grief: her sorrows are the sorrows of a child, but then they are so natural, they come so immediately from the heart, that it is impossible not to be affected with them; perhaps she may be dancing now. Two days ago she was a perfect fountain; I have given her no good example of self-governance. To you only it belongs, my dear, to unite tenderness and resolution. I am very well, and behaved very well upon the road. The confinement of the carriage hurts my knees a little, but walking carries it off again. My hands, my poor hands, are still bad, but I am in hopes that the warm weather will cure them; it would give me no small joy. It is surprising to me, how people can accustom themselves to evils and inconvenience; if any one had told me, that I should have been able to endure the pain and fatigue I have undergone, I should not have believed it, and yet so it has been, and so it is.

The good Abbé is very well; I shall write to you again from Malicorne, where I expect to find letters from you. Pray calculate the moons during your pregnancy; it will lead, perhaps, to a confirmation of your hopes respecting the life of your child. I embrace the Comte; and as to you, my dear child, when should I finish, were I to tell you all my thoughts, and all my affection for you?

LETTER 401

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Malicorne, Saturday, March 28, 1676.

I have met two of your letters on the road, my dear child, which have afforded me no small degree of pleasure, as they give me fresh proofs of your affectionate regard for my health by the measures you advise me to adopt respecting it. In return for this, I assure you that I see no reason why the little Adhémar should not live a century, at least. You mention the fifteenth of June; upon reckoning the moons to the eleventh of February, I find you had entered two days upon the ninth month; that is sufficient. As to myself, the change of air, and the continuance of the fine weather, have done me a great deal of good: if I could stay here a week or ten days, the friendly attentions of Madame de Lavardin would complete the cure; but a thousand things call me to Paris, both on your account, and my son's. Think of the waywardness of our fate: Tallard's marriage has prevented Viriville from purchasing the guidonage: here are all our measures defeated at once: is not this very strange, or rather very cruel? Madame de La Baume strikes from afar.

If I go to Bourbon, and you join me there, that will be my true health, and I shall live this winter upon the hopes of seeing you. Madame de Lavardin thinks there is very little in the *highness* of the Princesse de Tarente, and that there is no comparison between Madame de Vaudemont, your friend, who is so far from any sovereignty, and the Princess Emilie de Hesse, who has just left it; for since her widowhood, the title has not been contested. In short, I do not think I have committed you after these instances. Some other hand must finish, for mine will proceed no further.

When I came here, Madame de Lavardin spoke to me of M. Fléchier's Funeral Oration. We read it together, and I ask M. de Tulle a thousand pardons, but I really think it superior to his. I think it more uniformly beautiful; I read it with astonishment, and can hardly comprehend how the same things can be expressed in such a different manner: in short, I was quite charmed with it. We were very glad of the news you sent us from Messina [1], which carried an air of authority with it, on account of your being in the neighbourhood. What madness could possess these people to have such an aversion to the poor French, who are the most polite and engaging people in the world? Always inform me of your tragic histories; never conceal anything, for a state of suspense is worse than the most cruel certainty. Madame de Lavardin sends you a note, the answer to which, I will deliver more carefully than that to Bussy. The circuitous way you take to write to each other is very droll [2]. You know, I suppose, that M. de Coëtquen arrived in Paris, at the same time M. de Chaulnes did: the animosity that exists between them, and the complaints made by de Coëtquen, must furnish a fine scene, if the King would hear them together. I am likewise informed, that M. de Rohan has quitted the service, on not being made a Brigadier; so we shall see the fashion of volunteers will return again. Adieu, my dearest Comtesse, this is sufficient for to-day.

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[1] Messina having been surrendered to France, owing solely to the factions that divided it, the Spanish party, which was still powerful, excited frequent seditions. The victories of Duquêne in the Mediterranean, kept the French there a long time, but in 1678 they evacuated it. The Spaniards again took possession of it; and this city became, as Naples has become in our day, the scene of the most atrocious revenge.

[2] These letters went from Burgundy to Paris, from Paris to Brittany, from Brittany to Provence, etc.

LETTER 402

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, April 8, 1676.

I am dull and mortified, my dear child, at not being able to write all I wish. I begin to be impatient at this tedious delay. I am extremely well in health, the change of air has been of great service to me, but my hands cannot be persuaded to share in the recovery. I have seen all our friends, male and female. I keep my room, and observe your advice in making the care of my health my principal concern. The Chevalier (de Grignan) comes and chats with me till eleven o'clock: he is very obliging. I got so far the better of his modesty, as to prevail on him to give me an account of his campaign; when we both shed tears to the memory of M. de Turenne. What think you of Maréchal de Lorges? Is he not fortunate? Honours, riches, and a pretty wife! she was educated as one destined to be in time a great lady. Fortune is a pretty goddess; but I cannot forgive her incivilities to ourselves.

M. DE CORBINELLI *also writes to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

(*Enclosed in Madame* DE SÉVIGNÉ'S *letter.*)

I am just come in time, Madame, to relieve this poor weak hand; but I shall resign the pen whenever it pleases. It was going to inform you of a droll speech of M. d'Armagnac's. There was a dispute concerning the places of the Princes and Ducs at the communion, which was thus regulated by His Majesty: immediately after the Princes of the blood, followed M. de Vermandois, and the ladies; the attendance of the rest of the Ducs and Princes of Lorraine being dispensed with: upon this, M. d'Armagnac took upon him to expostulate with His Majesty on the arrangement, but the King giving him to understand that he would

have it so, "Sire," replies M. d'Armagnac, *"le charbonnier est le maître à sa maison*[1]." This was considered excellent by every one; we also think it so, and I am sure you will.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *continues and concludes her letter to her Daughter.*

I do not like to employ secretaries who have more wit than myself. I am afraid to make them write all my nonsense. The little girl was excellent on this account. I still intend to go to Bourbon; and cannot but wonder that any one should endeavour to dissuade me from it, since it is the advice of all the physicians.

I mentioned to d'Hacqueville yesterday, that you had said, you would come and pay me a visit there. I need not tell you how much I wish it, nor how much I regret passing my life thus without you. It seems as if we had another in store, for which we reserve the pleasure of seeing each other continually, and enjoying our mutual affection; but we are wasting the present, which is our all, and death closes the account: this is an affecting thought. But, notwithstanding the desire I have for your company, if you imagine the expense of the journey will be a means of preventing your coming here next winter, I would not have you think of it; I had rather not see you till then, for I have no hopes of going to Grignan. The good Abbé will not go; he has a great deal of business here, and besides that is apprehensive of the climate. I find in referring to my treatise on ingratitude, that it will not be right to leave him at his age; and as I know a separation from me would be like that of soul and body, I should always reproach myself if he were to die in my absence. Consider, therefore, whether, for the pleasure of being together for three weeks, we should sacrifice that of spending the whole winter together; settle this in your mind, according to the plan and situation of your affairs; remembering at the same time that my affection, and the miserable state

[1] The coal-heaver is master in his own house. [Translation.]

I have been in, call upon you to give me all the comfort in your power, and the greatest of all comforts is that of seeing you. If you could come back with me here from Bourbon, it would be excellent; we would pass our autumn at Livry; and in the winter, M. de Grignan might come and see us, and take you away with him in the spring. This would be the easiest way, the most natural, and the most desirable for me. Think seriously of all this, there is no time to lose: I shall set out for Bourbon, or Vichy, next month.

You wish me to inform you particularly of my health; except some flying pains which I feel occasionally in my hands and knees, I am quite well. I sleep well, and eat well in moderation. I have no one to sit up with me, and I begin to feed myself with my left hand: it was the most ridiculous thing in the world to see me fed; and with regard to writing, you see my performance. I am told wonders in praise of Vichy, and I think I shall prefer it to Bourbon for two reasons; first, because Madame de Montespan, they say, is going to Bourbon; and secondly, because Vichy is nearer to you; so that if you should come to me, you will have a less fatiguing journey, and if the *worthy* should change his mind we shall be nearer to Grignan. In short, my dear child, I cherish the sweet hope of seeing you; you must arrange everything, but pray let me see you longer than a fortnight: it would not be worth while to take so much trouble, and have so much regret at parting with you again for so short a period. You laugh at Villebrune, but I have been advised here to do exactly as he advised me. I am going to foment my hands; and if you knew the agitation caused by the equinox, you would retract your errors. The *frater* will soon join his brigade, and from thence will go to *matins*. I have kept my room for six days, that I may recover from the fatigue of my journey. I receive everybody; the Soubises, the Sullys, have come to see me for your sake. I hear no mention of sending M. de Vendôme to Provence. Your residence there deserves that some dignity should be conferred

on you; all your reasons are admirable, but it is not I who do not wish to go to Grignan.

The Chevalier de Mirabeau has told us, how much you were affected with the news of my illness, and that six hours' grief had altered you so as scarcely to be known. You may judge, my dear, how sensibly I felt these unfeigned proofs of your affection. I have seen the Duchesse de Sault; she is extremely handsome, and as gay as a lark, which shows that she has passed all her life at church with her mother: her spirits are inconceivable: she is going into Dauphiné. Her husband seems melancholy; but that is attributed to his having left the service. It is said, and he begins to think so himself, that he ought not to have cared about being appointed Lieutenant-General a year sooner or later. I only touch upon these subjects and suppress half my thoughts on account of my poor hand. The Princesse de Tarente is expected here in a day or two. MADAME has written to her very affectionately, calling her "good aunt." About a week ago, M. de Vendôme said to the King, that he hoped after the campaign was ended, His Majesty would permit him to go and take possession of the government he had done him the honour to give him. "Sir," replied the King, "when you know how to manage your own affairs, I will give you the charge of mine;" and there it ended.

Adieu, my dearest child. I take up the pen, and lay it down, ten times in writing a letter; do not fear therefore that I shall hurt my hand.

LETTER 403

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, April 10, 1676.

The more I think of it, my child, the more I am against your paying me a visit only for a fortnight. If you come to Vichy or to Bourbon, it ought to be on your

way hither, and we would spend the remainder of the summer and the autumn there. You should nurse, and comfort me, and M. de Grignan should come and see you in the winter, and dispose of you in his turn as he thought proper. It is thus you ought to visit a mother you love, it is thus you ought to comfort her after she has suffered a painful illness, and a thousand other inconveniences, and lost the flattering idea of being immortal. At present she begins to feel some little doubts, and is mortified to such a degree, as to believe, that she may some day occupy the bark of Charon, and that she is not exempted from his jurisdiction. In short, instead of the journey into Brittany which you were so desirous to take, I only propose, and ask this of you.

My son is going away: I am very melancholy at the idea of this separation. Nothing is to be seen in Paris, but preparations for the campaign[1]; complaints of want of money are greater than usual, but I believe no one will stay behind now, any more than in former years. The Chevalier has gone without bidding me adieu; he wished to avoid it, and has spared me a painful leave-taking, for I have a very sincere regard for him. You see that my hand-writing begins to resume its usual character; I consider the cure of my hand chiefly to depend on it; it well knows, that I will excuse it for some time from any other exercise. I cannot yet lift anything; a spoon seems a ponderous machine. I am still forced to submit to such regulations as are troublesome and mortifying; but I do not complain now I can write to you. The Duchesse de Sault visits me like one of my old friends; I think she likes me. She came twice with Madame de Brissac. What a contrast there is between these two characters! the first would certainly please you. My hand is tired, and wishes to rest: I owe it this complaisance, for the favour it has rendered me.

[1] A congress had been assembled at Nimeguen in July 1675. But, though it continued, peace was not any more advanced.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*
(Enclosed in his Mother's letter.)

Je vais partir de cette ville;
Je m'en vais Mercredi tout droit à Charleville,
Malgré le chagrin qui m'attend [1].

I did not think it necessary to finish the stanza, because all my history is comprehended in these three lines. You cannot conceive the joy it gives me, to see my mother's health so much restored. I still insist on it, that you ought to come and see her at Bourbon; you may return with her, and stay here till M. de Grignan returns, to give a new lustre to your beauties, and make you appear, in the Castilian language,

La gala del pueblo,
La flor del Abril [2].

If you follow my advice, you will be happier than I am; you will see my mother, without the pain of parting from her in two or three days, a pain that is usually accompanied with other uneasinesses easy to be imagined. I am again guidon, guidon eternally, guidon with a grey beard; what comforts me is, that all things in this world have an end, and there is no probability that this is an exception to the general rule. Adieu, my beautiful little sister; wish me a happy journey: I fear the interested soul of M. de Grignan will forbid you this kind wish; but I think, notwithstanding, you will both be glad to see me again.

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[1] I am leaving this town; I shall set out on Wednesday for Charleville, in spite of all the vexations that attend me. [Translation.]

[2] The pride of the village, the flower of April. [Translation.]

LETTER 404

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, April 15, 1676.

I am very melancholy, my dear; my poor boy has just gone; he has so many little social virtues that are the charm of society, that were he only an acquaintance I should regret his loss. He desired me over and over again to tell you, that he forgot to take notice to you of the story of your Proteus, who was at one time a Capuchin, at another time a galley-slave; he was highly amused at it. It is supposed we are going to undertake the siege of Cambray; this is so extraordinary a step, that everyone thinks we have had communications from some one in the place. If we lose Philisbourg, it will be very difficult to repair the breach: *vederemo,* we shall see. But still we reason and make almanacs, all of which end with, *the King's star will prevail.*

At length Maréchal Bellefonds has cut the thread that tied him here. Sanguin has purchased his place [1] for five hundred and fifty thousand livres, and a *brevet de retenue* of three hundred and fifty thousand. This is a fine settlement, and an assurance of a cordon bleu [2]. M. de Pomponne has paid me a very cordial visit: all your friends have exerted themselves wonderfully. I do not go out yet. The cold winds retard the cure of my hands, and yet I write better than I did, as you may see. I turn myself at night on my left side; I eat with my left hand: these are left-handed performances. My face is very little altered; you would soon discover that you have seen it somewhere before; it is because I have not been bled, and have endeavoured to get cured of my illness without such

[1] Of premier Maître d'Hotel, or Lord Chamberlain, to the King.

[2] M. de Sanguin was not created a Knight of the King's order at the promotion in 1688, but the Marquis de Livry his son, who was premier Maître d'Hotel, was amongst those promoted in that of 1724.

remedies. I thank you for mentioning the *pigeons* to me. Where has the little one acquired this timidity? I am afraid you will throw the blame upon me: you cast a suspicious eye towards me. This humour will, I dare say, pass off, and you will not be obliged to make a monk of him. I am resolved to go to Vichy; they have set me against Bourbon on account of the air. The Maréchale d'Estrées wishes me to go to Vichy; she says it is a delightful country. I have told you what I think of that affair; either resolve to return hither with me, or do not come at all; for a fortnight will only disturb me with constant thoughts of a separation, and will be on the whole a foolish and useless expense. You know how dear the sight of you is to me; so take your own measures.

I wish you had finished the bargain about your estate: M. de Pomponne tells me it is raised to a Marquisate. I desired him to make it a Dukedom: he assured me it would give him great pleasure to do so, and that he would use all expedition in drawing up the patents. This is a considerable step. I am delighted to hear the *pigeons* are so well. How does the little tiny or rather the great fat one do? I love him dearly, for resolving to live against wind and tide. But I cannot forget my little girl [1]; I suppose you will determine on putting her into Saint-Marie, according to the resolutions you adopt this summer; all depends upon that. You seem satisfied with the devotions of Passion and Easter weeks: you shut yourself up at Grignan. For my part, my thoughts were not affected with anything; I had no object to strike the sense: I ate meat till Good Friday, and had only the comfort of being very distant from any opportunity of committing sin. I told La Mousse you remembered him; and he advises you to make the most of your man of wit. Adieu, my dear child.

[1] Marie-Blanche d'Adhémar, born the 15th November 1670.

M. DE CORBINELLI *also writes to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

(*Enclosed in Madame* DE SÉVIGNÉ'S *letter.*)

I always come in at a fortunate time to relieve this poor hand, which was just going to tell you that the good Princesse de Tarente has been here, and that she is so full of business, and so stunned with the noise of Paris, that I could not say anything to her about your answer. We mutually regret the tranquillity of *The Rocks.* But I am weary of acting the secretary, and so I will talk to you a little myself.

Your good mother mentioned the project of Cambray to you, but very slightly. This is what the politicians say of the affair. It is certain that our troops are all distributed to different parts; some are before Cambray, others before Ypres; and others are sent towards Bruxelles, whither Vaudrai has been dispatched. The design of this is, to amuse the allies, and to prevent them from forming a strong army by the junction of their several garrisons. But what is considered the worst, is sending a Secretary of State [1] to assemble the troops, and carry orders himself to all parts. M. de Créqui is at Cambray; M. d'Humières at Ypres, but as to the rest, their destination is still known only to the King. The day of his departure was kept secret till Monday on leaving the Council-room. The Duc de Lunebourg has declared against us, and furnished the Imperialists with five or six thousand men: the Princes, his brothers, are of little consequence, that is, the Duc d'Hanover [2], and the Bishop of Osnabruck. We have demanded the Infanta of Bavaria [3] for the Dauphin; but since her mother's [4] death, the King of Spain has demanded her likewise, and it is believed that he will obtain her, for the good Elector wishes to espouse the King of Poland's

[1] M. de Louvois.

[2] King George I. of England.

[3] Marie-Anne-Victoire de Bavière, married in 1680 to Louis, Dauphin of France.

[4] Henriette-Adélaïde de Savoie, who died the 18th of March, 1676.

widow [1], who is sister of the Emperor (Léopold). If M. de Marseilles could have parried this stroke, I should have said something to him.

The King has ordered the Parliament to make out a commission, for a Counsellor of the High Chamber to repair to Rocroi and examine Madame de Brinvilliers; for they will not have her brought hither to be examined, because most of the gentlemen of the robe are related in some way or other to that unhappy woman.

LETTER 405

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, April 17, 1676.

Thank God I do not write very badly, my dear; at least, I answer for the first two or three lines, for you must know that my hands, I mean my right hand, will not render its assistance to anything but writing to you; I love it the better for it. If it is offered a spoon, it desires to be excused, and shakes and spills everything in it: offer it anything else, it is just the same, it refuses flat and plain, and thinks I am already sufficiently obliged to it. In fact, this is all the service I require of it: I am extraordinarily patient, and wait for relief from the warm weather and Vichy. Since I have been informed there is a pump there, and a bath, and that the waters are as good as at Bourbon, the clearness of the air and the beauty of the country have determined me to give the preference to it, and to set out as soon as I possibly can. I have told you so often that I will not have your company if I cannot enjoy it longer than a fortnight, that you must settle the rest. You know my heart, but I must not believe implicitly in everything it wishes; you are better acquainted than I am with the possibilities and impossibilities.

[1] Eléonore-Marie of Austria; widow of Michel Viesnoviski.

The King left Paris yesterday, but it is not absolutely known what siege he is going to undertake. I have seen M. de Pomponne; he desires me to make you a thousand compliments for him. I have been at Mademoiselle de Méri's, who has charming apartments, and extremely well furnished: there is no leaving her rooms, they are so pleasant. The Villars are very dull at Maréchal de Bellefonds' absolute resignation. I have been out but three times; does not that please you? My activity is quite over; ask Corbinelli, for here he is.

M. DE CORBINELLI *also writes to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.
(*Enclosed in Madame* DE SÉVIGNÉ'S *Letter.*)

Indeed, Madame, it is true, she is very good, and so completely altered, that she is rather the image of indolence than activity, unless when you and your affairs are in question. This refreshing calm is one of the best remedies she could have had; and she seems already to have a taste for indolence: I, who make it my ruling passion, rejoice at it, as it must be of great service to your excellent mother. But stay, she interrupts me to dictate two or three witticisms of Madame de Cornuel's, which made M. de Pomponne burst into those fits of laughter that you have so often witnessed. Madame de Cornuel, seeing Madame de Lionne with some very large diamonds in her ears, said, in her presence too: "These large diamonds look like bacon in a mouse-trap."

The other day she was with some young men, and said, "she thought she was among dead people, for they smelled very offensively, and said nothing."

Third witticism. In speaking of the Comtesse de Fiesque, she said, "that she preserved her beauty by being pickled in folly." Besides an infinite number of others, which were spoken with so much indifference and unconcern, that they were the more entertaining.

I need not tell you, I suppose, that Madame de Montespan set out yesterday morning at six o'clock, either for Clagny, or Maintenon; which of the two, is a secret; but

we all know that she is to return on Saturday to St.-Germain, from whence she will go the latter end of the month to Nevers, till the season for taking the waters.

There is a great talk of the siege of Condé, which is to be finished as soon as possible, in order to send the troops into Germany, and curb the insolence of the Imperialists, who cannot be brought to abandon Philisbourg. The chief affairs in Europe are on that side. We must all have the glory of the treaty of Munster; or at least, keep the Empire from taking advantage of it. Not but that the charms of the Princess of Bavaria have a great share in our disputes; for all the Princes who are marriageable, aspire to her hand, and we shall some day see her the heroine of, at least, a dozen romances.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *continues and concludes her letter to her Daughter.*

This has been a great relief to my hand, but I am sorry I have nothing left to tell you. Do not you think Madame de Cornuel's witticisms excellent? Adieu, my dearest child; I feel for you the most perfect and tender affection, you are worthy of it, and it is absolute vanity to boast of my love for you.

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*LETTER 406

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, April 22, 1676.

You have passed the Jubilate, and are no longer stationary: how well you express yourself upon this subject! You are not tired of devotion, but of the want of it. Ah! good heavens! this it is that drives us to despair. I think I feel this misfortune more sensibly than anyone: it seems as if everything would inspire me with devotion, but efforts and reflection very little advance the work. I sup-

posed M. de La Vergne a Jansenist; but by the praises you bestow on him for admiring the *Moral Essays,* I see plainly that he is not one of our *brethren.* Are you not pleased with the treatise on the *Resemblance of Self-love and Charity*? It is my favourite. Grace it is true is very triumphant in the two daughters of Désœillets [1]: they must have had an especial call. I shall be very glad to see M. de Monaco; but I wish him to come soon, that he may have seen you the more recently. Madame de Vins is not with child; but she is so altered that I shall advise her to say she is. She is the best creature in the world, and pays me great attention. My health continues good. I am a thousand leagues from a dropsy, and have never had the slightest tendency to one: but I have no hope of the cure of my hands, shoulders, and knees, but from Vichy, so rudely have my poor nerves been afflicted with the rheumatism. I think of nothing now but my departure. The Abbé Bayard and Saint-Hérem are expecting me there: I told you the beauty of the country and the walks, and the fineness of the air, had borne the palm from Bourbon. I have seen the best ignoramuses here, who advise such different remedies for my hands, that, in order to make them agree, I use not one of them; and I think myself very fortunate that they are of the same opinion with regard to Vichy and Bourbon. After this journey, I think you may resume the idea of health and gaiety which you have laid by for me. With regard to plumpness, I do not imagine I shall ever be as I have been: my shape is now so finely cut, that I do not think it can alter, and as for my face, it is quite ridiculous that it should still remain as it is. Your little brother is gone, and I am grieved: you have guessed rightly what it is that keeps him still, to his great regret, a guidon. M. de Viriville has complained to the King, and has I believe obtained permission for his daughter to change her convent. He came to see me on the day I did a very foolish thing: I went to dine at Livry with Corbinelli; the weather was divine; and I walked delightfully till five

[1] A celebrated actress.

in the evening, and then I returned full of renovated strength and health.

If Mademoiselle de Méri will accompany me to Vichy, I shall be very glad to have her with me. I have refused Madame de Longueval (*le Chanoine*), that I may be at liberty: she will go with Madame de Brissac, which she will prefer, and we shall all meet together. We pretend to find fault with this arrangement, but it is only to laugh at the Duchess. *Quantova* was to go to Bourbon, but the plan has been altered; and this induces her good friend to return sooner than was expected. Her female friend has taken her to her country house to spend a few days; we shall see what places she will honour with her presence. Madame de Coulanges is always amiable, and so much more so as she shows less eagerness than ever for the affections of that country, whose value she well knows. The Abbé Têtu is still delighted with her correspondence, and returns with pleasure all her epigrams. The cousin [1] is still in great subjection; but he appears to me a broken rib, since the assiduity he paid for three months to the *charmer's* [2] old mistress. That made our fair friend, on the cousin's return, considered as a slighted damsel; but though it was not true, the personage was disagreeable. Mesdames d'Heudicourt, de Ludres, and de Gramont, paid me a visit yesterday. Your friends show their regard for you, by the attentions they pay me. M. de La Trousse is not to join the army of Maréchal de Rochefort for a fortnight; all the rest are gone long ago. The poor guidon fancied himself really in love with Madame de Pont when he went away. Corbinelli is still a grey wolf, as you know, appearing, disappearing, and good for nothing: our friendship is as firm as ever. I shall make known your reproaches to La Mousse: he is at home, is very unsociable, difficult to find, and still more difficult to keep. He is often dissatisfied; he had a quarrel with my son, of which he is very much ashamed, for he was so cruel to himself as not

[1] The Marquis de La Trousse.

[2] The Duc de Villeroi, afterwards Maréchal of France.

to have a particle of reason on his side. Madame de Sanzei is as melancholy as Andromache; Saint-Aubin and his Iris in their Faubourgs, and in heaven; d'Hacqueville is whirling in the vortex of human affairs, and replete with every virtue; Madame de La Fayette, with her feverish habit, has always select parties at her house; M. de La Rochefoucauld is just the same as you have always seen him. The Prince is going to Chantilly; this is not the year for great Generals, for which reason Montécuculli has not taken the field. The good La Troche says, that she is going to Anjou; she is as kind as ever, continually going and coming: she is called the female d'Hacqueville. M. de Marseilles will be very much surprised to find his Abbé de La Vergne so delighted with you. You are fortunate in having had Guitaud; you were good friends wherever you met; I can conceive upon what terms you are at Aix: he is an amiable man, and a pleasant companion; remember me to him with kindness. I thank M. de Grignan for liking my letters; I doubt whether his taste be good. Be not alarmed at the length of this, I have laid it down and resumed it several times.

LETTER 407

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, April 24, 1676.

My hands are still very troublesome. Old de Lorme advises me not to set out till the end of May, but every body is going, and the house I intended to take has slipped through my hands: he is for my going to Bourbon, but that is mere cabal, so I shall adhere to my resolution of going to Vichy. If your affairs would have permitted you to have joined me there, and to have returned from thence and have spent the autumn and part of the winter with me, and then for M. de Grignan to have come and taken you home with him, it would have been a real pleasure to

me; but I am willing to believe you could not manage it, as you did not listen to the proposal. If Mademoiselle de Méri had been prepared for taking the waters, I should have been delighted to take her with me, as she may have told you; but Brayer wishes her to take some cooling medicine first. Madame de Saint-Géran too is quite out of the question, on account of her husband's departure, and her zeal for devotion. Send some little remembrance to her and to Madame de Villars; they both love you, and are uncommonly attentive to me. M. de Villars [1] is going Ambassador to Savoie, whither his wife will soon follow him. We have no news from Condé, except of the loss of eight or ten men, and that Maréchal d'Humières has had his hat shot through: God grant this may be the worst we may have. I have seen M. du Périer, who told me, that you heard the news of my being laid up with the rheumatism while you were at cards, and that it made you shed tears: how can I withhold mine at such inestimable proofs of your affection? I cannot describe the emotion of my heart at hearing this. All Provence was in anxiety for my health, on account of the uneasiness it occasioned you. Is it possible to love too tenderly a child by whom I am so much beloved? But, to tell you the truth, I do not think I am ungrateful.

Adieu, my dear, my amiable child, your letters are my greatest pleasure, till you can give me a more substantial one.

LETTER 408

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, April 29, 1676.

I must begin by telling you that Condé was taken by storm on Saturday night. The news at first made my heart beat; I feared the victory had cost us dear, but it

[1] The Marquis de Villars was at that time appointed Ambassador Extraordinary in Savoie.

does not prove so; we have lost some men, but none of any note; this may be reckoned a complete happiness. Larrei, the son of M. Laîné, who was killed in Candie, or his brother, is dangerously wounded. You see how soon our old heroes are forgotten.

Madame de Brinvilliers is not so comfortable as I am; she is in prison, and endeavours to pass her time there as pleasantly as she can; she desired yesterday to play at piquet, because she was dull. Her confession has been found: it informs us, that at the age of seven years, she ceased to be a virgin; that she had ever since gone on at the same rate; that she had poisoned her father, her brothers, one of her children, and herself; but the last was only to make trial of a counter-poison. Medea was a saint compared with her. She has owned this confession to be her own writing: it was an unaccountable folly; but she says she was in a high fever when she wrote it, and that it was an act of madness or phrensy, which does not deserve a serious thought.

The Queen has been twice at the Carmelites with Madame de Montespan. The latter set on foot a lottery; she collected everything that could be useful to the nuns; this was a great novelty and amusement in the convent. She conversed a long time with Sister Louise [1] de la Miséricorde, and asked her, whether it was really true, that she was as happy there as it had been generally reported. She replied, "I am not happy, but I am contented." *Quanto* talked to her a great deal of the brother of MONSIEUR; and asked her, if she had no message to send him, and what she should say to him for her. She replied in the sweetest tone and manner possible, though perhaps a little piqued at the question; "Whatever you please, Madame, whatever you please." Fancy this to be repressed with all the grace, spirit, and modesty, which you so well understand. *Quanto* afterwards wished for something to eat, and sent to purchase some ingredient that was necessary for a sauce she prepared herself, and which she ate with a

[1] Madame de La Vallière.

wonderful appetite. I tell you the simple fact without the least embellishment. When I think of the letter you wrote me last year about M. de Vivonne, I consider all I send you as a burlesque. To what lengths will not folly lead a man who thinks himself deserving of such exaggerated praise!

You congratulate me upon the hopes I have of finding Madame de Brissac at Vichy, and you ask me, what entertainment I can promise myself from her. I have made choice of her, my dear, to teach me simplicity and sincerity in conversation. If I had had my son with me the other day, whom I might have employed as my secretary, I would have sent you a sketch of the superficial conversation she entertained us with in this room.

You say, my dear, you have taken, in idea, the remedies prescribed to you; you are very fortunate: I wish I could be bled in idea; for they say it is a necessary preparative to my drinking the waters.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *writes also to the Comte* DE GRIGNAN.
(*Enclosed in her letter to her Daughter.*)

I assure you, my dear Comte, I should be a thousand times more pleased with the favour you mention, than with one conferred by His Majesty. You comprehend the extreme desire I have to see your wife. Without being a coal-heaver, you are more master in your own house than all the coal-heavers in the world, and no man is superior to you in any respect whatever. But be generous; and, when she has acted the part of a good wife a little longer, lead her to me by your own hand, and bid her act that of a good daughter. It is thus a man of honour acquits himself of his duties; and this is the only way to restore me to health, and to life.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *continues and concludes her letter to her Daughter.*

How strange it is, that you are still talking of Cambray! We shall have taken another town before you

will have heard of the taking of Condé. What think you of the favour fortune has done us, in bringing our friend the Turk into Hungary? Corbinelli is much pleased with it: I shall have a warm dispute with him upon the subject. I admire the Coadjutor's devotion; if he has any to spare, he may send it to the handsome Abbé. I feel the departure of my grand-daughter: is she sorry at being placed in a convent?

I know not whether Vardes will wish to dispose of his post in imitation of the Maréchal (de Bellefonds). I pity him sincerely; you interpret his sentiments amiss: it is in vain for him to speak honestly, you will not believe a word he says: you are wicked. He has just written me a very affectionate letter, which I take in the literal sense, because I am good. Here comes M. de Coulanges, who will tell you in what way Madame de Brinvilliers has attempted to destroy herself.

Monsieur DE COULANGES *adds the following to Madame* DE SÉVIGNÉ'S *letter to her Daughter.*

She thrust a stick, not into her eye, nor into her ear, nor into her mouth; I leave you to guess where; but she would certainly have died, if timely assistance had not been rendered her. I am delighted, Madame, that you were pleased with the poems. I expect M. de Bandol's return with impatience, to know what reception you gave the poem, entitled, *Tobie.* He must certainly have had the address to impart it to you, without offence to the purity of a soul, which you have so newly washed in the salutary streams of the Jubilate. Your mother is going to Vichy: I shall not accompany her, because my health has been better for some time. Neither do I think I shall go to Lyons: so that you must bring your beautiful face to Paris, if you expect a kiss from me. I salute M. de Grignan, and inform him I have contrived, should M. de Lussan gain his suit, that he may thank me for it, if he thinks proper.

LETTER 409

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, May 1, 1676.

I begin by thanking M. de Grignan a thousand times for the pretty gown he has sent me, I never saw a prettier one in my life; I am going to have it made up for the winter, to treat you with it. I often think, as well as you, of the evenings we passed together last winter: but pray, what should prevent us from passing this winter in the same way, if you are not against it? Everyone here is struck with amazement at your portrait; it is certainly much improved, the colours are grown stronger, and it is now a finished piece: if you suspect my veracity, come and see it yourself. A report has been in circulation these two or three days, of which everyone comes to me to know the truth. It is said that M. de Grignan has orders to turn the Vice-Legate neck and shoulders out of Avignon: I shall not believe a syllable of it till I hear it from you. The Grignans will have the honour of being excommunicated the first, if this noble war should begin; for the Abbé Grignan has had orders from His Majesty to forbid the Bishops from visiting the Nuncio.

I am in no hurry about setting out, for I know that June is a better month than May for drinking the waters, and so I shall begin my journey about the eleventh of next month. Madame de Montespan is on her way to Bourbon: Madame de Thianges accompanies her as far as Nevers, where she is to be met by the Duc and Duchesse of that place. My son informs me, they are going to besiege Bouchain with part of the army, while the King, with the main body, is to wait for the Prince of Orange, and give him battle. The Chevalier d'Humières has been out of the Bastille this week; this he owes to his brother. Nothing is talked of here, at present, but the

strange conversation and conduct of Madame de Brinvilliers: could one have thought she would have been afraid of forgetting the murder of her father at confession? The peccadilloes, too, that she was afraid of forgetting, were admirable. She was in love, it seems, with this Sainte Croix, and wished to marry him, and, for that purpose, gave her husband poison several times [1]. Sainte Croix, who did not wish to have a wife as wicked as himself, gave the poor husband a dose of counter-poison; so that, after being bandied about five or six times, sometimes poisoned, sometimes counter-poisoned, he is at last actually making intercession for his dear wife. Oh! there is no end of some people's follies.

I went to Vincennes yesterday with the Villars's: His Excellency sets out to-morrow for Savoie, and desired me to kiss your left hand for him. These ladies [2] love you very much: pray mention them when you write to me, by way of reward for their kindness. Adieu, my dear and amiable child, I shall say no more to-day.

LETTER 410

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Monday, May 4, 1676.

It is you, then, my child, who refuse to come and spend the summer with me; and not M. de Grignan! As you are a reasonable person, and as I cannot but think you

[1] This romantic circumstance appears to be unfounded. The sentence of the Parliament on Brinvilliers makes no mention of this crime. It includes only the father, the two brothers, and the sister, of this atrocious woman. Extraordinary as an event may be, the public voice loves to make it appear still more so by additional circumstances. The first moment is not the one to ascertain the real truth. Madame de Sévigné has the merit of relating very few of these uncertain anecdotes. Voltaire, whose authority is always good, says that Brinvilliers did not attempt her husband's life, who made allowances for an amour, of which he was the cause.

[2] Mesdames de Villars and St.-Géran.

have some wish to see me, you must certainly have found some impossibilities in the proposal I made to you which I could not discover: but you may rest assured that I should come to Grignan, had not the good Abbé, who accompanies me from pure kindness, some affairs on his hands that would oblige him to return again very speedily, and of which mine make a part. My proposal was therefore a very natural one, for, to see you for a fortnight only at Vichy, would be a pleasure attended with too much pain.

Pray tell me honestly your reasons, and your plans for next winter; for I can never think you intend to let it pass, without affording me the comfort and happiness of embracing you. I will let you know the day I set out, and will enclose a direction for writing to me.

You see I write tolerably well: I imagine my hands will soon be well, but I feel myself so full of humours by the continual perspirations I am subjected to, that I compare myself to a sponge that wants to be squeezed. The fear of having a second time in my life, the amusement of a rheumatism, would make me take a much longer journey than from hence to Vichy.

You ask me what I do. Why, I take an airing very frequently; one day I go to the races with the Villars'; at another time I pay a visit to the Faubourg, and then I rest a while. I have been to Mignard's: he has painted M. de Turenne upon his piebald charger; it is one of the finest things that ever was seen. Cardinal de Bouillon came to me, and desired that, if I was at leisure, I would go and see this masterpiece: Mignard's imagination has done even more than his pencil.

I have had another conversation of two hours with M. du Perier; I am never tired of the subject of Provence: I made him tell me a thousand things relative to you, especially about your games, at which you lose so much money, and your operas, where you ruminate so finely. I made him tell me all the *squibs* of the Procurators, and how you restored peace to Provence, and about the first

President, and La Tour d'Aigues; and a thousand other things. In short, I have refreshed my memory with everything that a week's fever had made me forget, for you know I have been subject to so many wanderings, that my poor brain often confounded truth with falsehoods.

LETTER 411

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, May 6, 1676.

My heart is almost broken about my poor granddaughter [1], she will be inconsolable at being separated from you, and confined, as you say, in prison: I am astonished how I had the courage to place you there, but the thoughts of seeing you frequently, and of taking you from thence when I chose, made me determine upon this barbarity, which was then thought a prudent step, as being requisite to your education. In short, we must follow the destinations of Providence, which disposes of us all as it pleases. Madame de Gué, the nun, is going to Chelles. She carries a very handsome allowance with her, that she may want for nothing; but I fancy she will change her station again, unless a young man [2], who is the physician of the cloister, prevails on her to fix her residence there; I saw him yesterday at Livry. My dear child, he is eight and twenty, with the finest countenance I ever saw; eyes like Madame de Mazarin's, teeth like ivory, and the rest of his person like—like—*Rinaldo*: fine flowing black locks adorn the prettiest head you would wish to see; he is an Italian, and speaks Italian, as you may suppose. He remained at Rome till the age of twenty-two, and M. de Nevers and the Duchess at length brought him over to France, and M. de Brissac has established him in the charming Abbey

[1] She was lately placed in the convent of the nuns of St.-Marie of Aix. See Letter 404, of 15th April, 1676, in this volume.

[2] Amonio.

of Chelles, of which Madame de Brissac his sister is Abbess. He has a garden of medicinal herbs in the convent, but trust me, he has very little of a *Lamporechio* [1] in him. I fancy most of the young nuns will like him, and consult him in all their disorders, but I would take the sacrament that he will not cure one of them, in any other way than the strict rules of Hippocrates. Madame de Coulanges, who is just come from Chelles, thinks of him as I do. In short, all the handsome musicians at Toulongeon's [2] are mere frights to him. You cannot imagine how this little adventure has delighted us.

A word about the little Marquis (de Grignan); I beseech you not to be under any apprehension about his timidity. Remember, that the charming Marquis (de La Châtre) used to tremble and quake till he was twelve years old, and that La Troche, when young, was so terrified at the least thing, that his mother could not bear to have him in her sight; and yet you see how much they have distinguished themselves since: let that comfort you. Fears of this kind are the mere effect of childhood, and when childhood is surmounted, instead of being afraid of raw-head and bloody bones, these personages are afraid only of being thought fearful, are afraid of being less esteemed than others, and that is sufficient to make them brave, and kill their thousands and ten thousands: let me then again beg you to make yourself easy on that score. As to his shape, it is another matter: I would advise you to put him into breeches, and then you will see better how his legs go on, and whether they are straightened as he grows. You must let him have room to stir himself, and unfold his little limbs: but you must put him on a pretty tight vest, which will confine his shape. I shall receive some further instructions, however, on this subject, which I will not fail to transmit to you. It would be a fine thing indeed, to see a Grignan with a bad shape! Do you not

[1] See La Fontaine's Tale of *Mazet de Lamporechio.*

[2] The elder brother of the Comte de Gramont, and a remarkably pleasant man.

remember how pretty he was in his swaddling-clothes? I am no less uneasy than yourself at this alteration.

I must have been dreaming when I told you Madame de Thianges accompanied her sister part of the way; there was only Madame la Maréchale de Rochefort, and the Marquise de La Vallière, and they saw her as far as Essonne. She is now quite alone, and what is more, will meet with nobody at Nevers. If she had had a mind to have taken all the ladies at the Court with her, she had nothing to do but to speak. But another word respecting *the friend* (Madame de Maintenon); she is still more triumphant than the lady we have been speaking of; everything is subject to her will; all the attendants of her neighbour (the Queen) are devoted to her; one presents her with her box of paste, kneeling; another brings her gloves; a third lulls her to sleep; she salutes no one, and, I believe, in her heart, laughs very heartily at the parade. It is impossible, at present, to judge, how matters stand between her and her female friend.

The town is full of nothing but La Brinvilliers. Caumartin made a very foolish speech about the stick with which she endeavoured, ineffectually, to kill herself. "It was like Mithridates," he said: now you know he was proof against poison, and I need not lead you further into the application. Your application to my hand, of "Go, go, the complaint is vain [1]," made me laugh heartily, for the dialogue is complete, and my hand answers, "Ah, barbarian, what cruelty!"—"Go," I reply; "finish my writings, I will avenge myself for all I have suffered."—"What!" says my hand, "will you be inexorable?" And I finish by saying, "It is you, cruel wretch, who have taught me to be so." What humour you possess, my dear child, and how you would make me laugh, if I could visit you this summer at Grignan! But I must not think of it, for the *worthy* is overwhelmed with business: I reserve this pleasure for another year, and I hope you will come to see me before this year is passed.

[1] See Act II., Scene II., of the opera of *Alceste*.

I have been at the opera with Madame de Coulanges, Madame d'Heudicourt, M. de Coulanges, the Abbé de Grignan, and Corbinelli. Oh! there are some admirable things in this opera (*Atys*). The scenery is beyond all description, the dresses are superb, and there are some very beautiful parts in it; there is a scene of sleep, and dreams, the invention of which is surprising. The symphony consists entirely of bass, and the sounds are so lulling, that we admire Baptiste more than ever. But *Atys* is played by the same person who played the *Fury* and the *Nurse*; so that we always think we see the same droll characters in *Atys*. There are five or six new dancers that are equal to *Faure*, and they are a sufficient attraction to me; but, upon the whole, the town seems to like *Alceste* better; you shall judge for yourself, for you will certainly come for my sake, notwithstanding your want of curiosity. To be sure, it is a strange thing not to have seen Trianon; how can I, after that, propose to you to visit the Pont du Gard?

You will find the gentleman, whose adventure you have so easily divined, exactly the same as you have always seen him at the lady's: but it appears to me as if the combat ceased for want of champions [1]. The reproaches were founded upon pride, rather than jealousy: but when dryness is added to what was before dry, it confirms an indifference, inseparable from long attachments. I sometimes hear short and harsh replies, and I think they begin to feel the want of similarity of tastes and dispositions: but, notwithstanding all this, there is a considerable intimacy, and even friendship, which may last twenty years longer. The lady is really very pretty; I receive great attentions from her, and am not ungrateful. Women are worth their weight in gold.

The Comtesse de Fiesque was insisting the other day to Madame de Cornuel, that Combourg was no fool; upon which, Madame de Cornuel said to her, "My good Com-

[1] This refers to the intimacy between Madame de Coulanges and the Marquis de La Trousse.

tesse, you are like people who have eaten garlic." was not that excellent? M. de Pomponne has written to desire me, not to forget to write down all Madame de Cornuel's witticisms.

We shall set out on Monday; I shall not go through Fontainebleau, on account of the grief I suffered at parting from you there, and I have no desire to go there again except to meet you. I fear our correspondence will be a little interrupted now; this vexes me; for your letters are my greatest amusement, and you write as *Faure* dances. How I pity you, my dear, for being obliged to take filthy medicine blacker than ever! My little powder of antimony is the prettiest thing in the world; it is the staff of life, as old de Lorme says; but by the bye, I must tell you, that I disobey good M. de Lorme a little, for he wishes me to go to Bourbon, but the experience of a thousand people, the fine air, and less company, determine me to go to Vichy. The good Escars goes with me, to my great joy. My fingers will not close yet, and I have a pain in my knees and shoulders; in short, I am so full of serosities, as they are called, that I must absolutely have these marshes drained, which can only be done by drinking warm chalybeate waters, and then I think I shall do pretty well.

The journey to Aigues-Mortes must have been very pleasant, and you were a lazy creature not to be of the party. I have a very good opinion of your conversations with the Abbé de La Vergne, so long as you keep clear of the Bishop of Marseilles. Madame de Brissac's devotion was a fine farce; I will tell you more about her from Vichy: the Chanoine [1] has the direction of her conscience at present, and she, I am persuaded, will tell me everything. I have been bled this morning; this is really a serious affair! but I am now quite ready to set out.

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[1] Madame de Longueval, chanoinesse of the Abbey St.-Marie of Aix. She was sister of the Maréchale d'Estrées, and M. de Manicamp.

LETTER 412

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, May 8, 1676.

I shall set out on Monday, my dear child. Madame de Vins has gained a great part of her cause, in spite of M. d'Amboile, who signalized himself in his opposition to her. The good Princesse (de Tarente) is enraged with M. d'Ormesson, who has the management of M. de La Trémouille's affairs, because he will not allow her a certain addition, to the injury of the former creditors. She wept heartily to me just now, and told me, at the same time, how rudely she was treated by Madame de Monaco. But MADAME seems very fond of the good aunt, and sputters German with her finely, which does not a little vex Monaco.

My God! can it be true that La Simiane is going to be parted from her husband, on account of his gallantries? What folly! I should have advised her rather to have paid him in his own coin. I am told she is coming here, and that she is going to Brittany. Is all this true? I take my leave of you for the present, my dear, as this is not the day for our great dispatches. This post is a detestable thing: the letters are in town, and yet they will not distribute them till to-morrow; so that there are two to answer at once.

I am so well, that I forgot to tell you I took de Lorme's powders after being bled, that they agreed with me wonderfully, and that I am now ready to take my departure.

LETTER 413

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Sunday evening, May 10, 1676.

I shall set out to-morrow morning by day-break, and this evening Madame de Coulanges, and her husband, M. de La Trousse, Mademoiselle de Montgeron, and Corbinelli, are to sup with me, and to take their leave of me, by eating a pigeon-pie. The good d'Escars goes with me, and as the *worthy* finds that he may trust my health in her hands, he has very prudently spared himself the fatigue of the journey, and waits my return here, where he has a thousand affairs that require his presence: he will be very impatient till I come back, for let me tell you, that this separation, trifling as it is, costs him a good deal, and I am under some apprehensions respecting his health: the heart-ache is not good for old people; I shall therefore do all in my power to return as speedily as possible, since it is the only time in my life that I have had an opportunity of proving my gratitude for his kindness, by sacrificing to him even the idea of going to Grignan. This is exactly one of those cases in which love must give way to gratitude.

You will be entitled to five or six hundred pistoles from our uncle de Sévigné's legacy [1]; I wish you had them ready against the winter, for I well know the inconveniences you must be driven to by the great expenses you are obliged to incur, and therefore shall not urge the journey to Paris, persuaded that you love me sufficiently to wish to be with me at any rate. You know, likewise, my sentiments on that subject, and how wretched my life appears to me while deprived of the sight of one I so dearly love. It would be a provoking circumstance, if M. de Grignan should be obliged to pass the summer at Aix, besides a

[1] See Letter 399, of 22nd March, 1676, in this volume.

great expense, if it was only on account of play, which is a very considerable article with you. Fortune is strangely capricious: M. de La Trousse is supported by gaming.

You tell me you have found it necessary to be bled; the trembling hand of your young surgeon makes me tremble. The Prince said one day to a new surgeon, "Does not the idea of bleeding me make you tremble?"—"Faith, Sir," replied the man, "Your Highness has most reason to tremble." He was in the right. So you have left off your coffee; Mademoiselle de Méri has likewise driven it from her house in disgrace. After such a reverse, who would ever depend upon fortune? I am persuaded things that heat do not keep their ground so long as cooling things: I must return to them, at least; indeed all my disorders have arisen from an internal fever, which must be destroyed by the waters of Vichy, and then I am to return to a cooling regimen of fruits, salads, etc., etc. Let me advise you to pursue the same plan, rather than burn yourself up as you do. I request this favour of you for the sake of your own life, and that nothing may interrupt the comfort of mine.

I am now going to bed, my dear child; my little party has left me. Mesdames Pomponne, de Vins, de Villars, and de St. Géran, were here: I embraced them all for you. I shall set out to-morrow morning at five o'clock, and shall write to you from every place through which I pass. I embrace you with all my heart; I am sorry this expression is so much prostituted, for it would otherwise be an admirable one to explain my manner of loving you.

LETTER 414

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Montargis, Tuesday, May 12, 1676.

I wrote to you last night, my dear child, so that you will receive two of my letters by the same post, and if, after reading the first, you should chance to say, I wish I had another, there it will be another for you; and will inform you that I am at Montargis with the good d'Escars, in perfect health, excepting hands and knees.

You know the road hither; I avoided Fontainebleau, for I am determined not to see it till I go to meet you there. I slept at Courance, where I should have taken a fine walk, if I had not, from timidity, resembled a wet pullet. I may say wet, in the strictest sense of the word, for I perspire all day long; I still continue to wear my hare-skins, for the refreshing coolness of the morning that gives life to every other creature, appears to me like the frosts of December; so that I had rather be too hot for ten hours together, than too cold for half an hour. What think you of these pretty relics of the rheumatism? Do not you think I stand in need of the warm bath? At length, here I am upon the road, and upon your road too. Madame d'Escars and I talk of you incessantly. They say, that to take the waters, a person ought to be *spensierata* (happy in mind), and it is very difficult for me to be so, away from our good Abbé, of whose health I am in continual apprehension. Do you know too, how I have left him? with only a single servant. He insisted upon my having his coachman and Beaulieu, with two of his horses to make my set complete. I see no way of getting out of his debt, but by downright ingratitude.

Adieu, my dear. Alas! what avails it that I am drawing nearer to you? I pity you that you have not me at Paris, to send you some news of Brinvilliers [1].

[1] She was condemned on the 16th of June, to have her head cut

LETTER 415

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Nevers, Friday, May 15, 1676.

I am at a place which would tempt me to write to you whether I would or no; you may judge then how it is, knowing my disposition. The weather is delightful; this violent heat has passed off without a storm, I have no more of those crises I told you of; the country is very fine, and I find our river Loire as beautiful here as at Orléans: it is a great pleasure to meet with an old acquaintance upon the road. I have brought my large coach with me, so that we are quite at our ease, and enjoy the fine prospects which rise upon us every instant; all that vexes me is, that the roads will be bad in the winter, which will fatigue you in your journey.

We follow close upon the heels of Madame de Montespan, and hear at every place, how she looked, how she ate, how she drank, and how she slept. She is in a calash with six horses, and has the little Thianges with her; another coach follows with the same number of horses, with six of her women in it: she has two covered wagons, six mules, and ten or twelve men on horseback, without reckoning her officers; her whole retinue consists of about five and forty persons. She always finds her chamber and bed ready; she goes to bed immediately on her arrival, and eats heartily. She was here at the Castle, where M. de Nevers came to give orders for her reception, but he did not stay to receive her. She gives away a great deal in charity, and with a very good grace. She receives a cour-

off, her body burned, and her ashes scattered in the air. Sainte-Croix, her accomplice and her lover, was dead, having been suffocated by the vapour of a poison he was preparing. The too eager steps she took to recover a casket that was under the seals, excited suspicion, and determined the officers of justice to open it. It was found to be full of poisons, and by this means her crimes were detected.

ier from the army every day; she is now at Bourbon. The Princesse de Tarente, who knows all the rest, will inform me, and I shall take care to communicate it to you. Have I told you, that that same favourite of the King of Denmark, who was so romantically enamoured of the Princesse, her daughter, is in prison, and is to be tried? He had formed a little design, it seems, of dethroning his master and benefactor, and of making himself King. You find this man had no mean way of thinking. M. de Pomponne spoke of him to me the other day, as of a second Cromwell. Let me tell you, my dear child, that I find I shall not be able to live long without paying another visit to your Castle, with all its circumstances and dependencies; I cherish this pleasing hope, and wish the prospect was a little less distant. Adieu, my dear; I shall certainly write to you from Moulins, where I hope to find the letters you must by this time have sent to Paris. I am in utter ignorance of all kind of news: I have the war very much at heart, which is but a bad companion for the waters; but what is to be done, when we have a friend in the army? At that rate, I should not be able to take them till January. I read, while I am in the coach, a little *History of the Viziers,* and the intrigues of the seraglio, which is amusing enough: it is a book that is quite in fashion.

Good-night, my lovely. I salute Grignan, and send a thousand good wishes to La Garde; tell the latter by what ill-luck the wind has blown our guidonage down the stream: you are fortunate in having them both with you.

LETTER 416

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

From Moulins at the Convent of the Visitation, in the room in which my grandmother [1] died. Sunday, May 17, 1676, after vespers, with two little girls from Valençai at my side.

I arrived here, my dear, last evening, after a pleasant journey of six days. Madame Fouquet, with her brother-in-law and his son, came to meet me, and took me to their house to sleep. I dined here to-day, and to-morrow I set out for Vichy. I think the mausoleum very beautiful [2]. The good Abbé would have been delighted with it. The little girls are very amiable and pretty; you have seen them, and they remember hearing you sigh very deeply in this church; I believe I had some part in your sorrow; at least I am sure I sighed very mournfully myself much about the same time. Is it true that Madame de Guénégaud said to you, "Sigh, Madame, sigh; I have accustomed Moulins to the sighs that are brought from Paris!" I admire you greatly for having thought of a match for your brother; you have hit the right nail on the head, and I have a great esteem for the negotiator. I shall follow this clue on my return to Paris, and you may therefore write to d'Hacqueville about it. They judge very well of my son by my daughter; and it would be an event worthy of you to complete this marriage. I shall let no stone remain unturned on my side. And so, you think, my dear child, you were not sufficiently alarmed at my illness. What more, in the name of God, could you have done? you were in much

[1] Jeanne Françoise Frémiot, Baroness of Chantal, Foundress of the Order of the Visitation, beatified by a brief of Pope Benedict the XIV. and canonised by Clément XIII.

[2] The superb monument which Marie-Félice des Ursins erected in the church of the Visitation at Moulins, to the memory of her husband Henri, Duc de Montmorenci, who was beheaded at Toulouse the 30th of October, 1632, by an order of the Parliament of Toulouse.

greater alarm than I was in danger: as my two-and-twenty days of fever was only occasioned by pain, it gave no one apprehensions for my safety. My delirium proceeded only from want of proper nourishment, for I could swallow nothing but a little broth; besides, some people are delirious all the time of a fever. Your brother has remembered the nonsense I used to talk, and makes me ready to die with laughing at the repetition; he will tell it you when he sees you, and you will laugh as heartily as I did. Let your mind, therefore, be at rest, my dear child, for you have had but too much uneasiness already on my account.

M. de La Garde must certainly have had very substantial reasons to induce him to harness himself with another: I thought him quite free, bounding and gambolling in a meadow, and I find he has put his neck into the yoke as well as others.

Madame de Montespan is at Bourbon, where M. de La Vallière had given orders for her to be addressed by a deputation from all the towns in his government, but she declined the compliment. She has given twelve beds to the hospital, a great deal of money in charity, and receives visitors with politeness. M. Fouquet and his niece, who were drinking the waters at Bourbon, went to pay her a visit, and she conversed for nearly an hour with him upon some very curious subjects. Madame Fouquet went the next day; she was received with sweetness and affability, and Madame de Montespan listened to her, apparently, with great interest and compassion. God inspired Madame Fouquet with eloquence upon the occasion, both upon the subject of sharing her husband's confinement, and the hope that, if ever an opportunity offered, Madame de Montespan would remember her misfortunes. In short, without exacting any absolute promise, she set forth the horrors of her situation, and the confidence she had in her goodness, in terms that were calculated to affect the heart, without meanness or importunity; the bare recital affected me, and I am sure it would have affected you.

M. de Montespan's son [1] is now at Madame Fouquet's in the country. He is about ten years old, is handsome and sprightly; his father, on his return to Paris, left him with the Fouquets. The good d'Escars is well, and is extremely kind and careful of me. Pray relate to me the sorceries of Madame de Rus.

Adieu, my dear; I embrace you a thousand times, and love you as I love my salvation.

LETTER 417

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Vichy, Tuesday, May 19, 1676.

I begin to write to you to-day: my letter may go when it can, but I am resolved to have a little chat with you.

I arrived here last evening: Madame de Brissac with *le chanoine* [2], Madame de St. Hérem, and two or three others, came to receive me on the banks of the pretty river Allier: I think that if good search were made, some of the barges of Astræa might be found on its banks. M. de St. Hérem, M. de La Fayette, the Abbé Dorat, Planci, and some others, followed in another carriage, and on horseback. I was received with great joy. Madame de Brissac took me home to sup with her; and I think I can already see that *le chanoine* has the good Duchess just there—you see where I put my hand. I have rested myself to-day, and to-morrow I begin to drink the waters.

M. de St. Hérem came this morning to take me to mass, and from thence to dinner with him; Madame de Brissac was of the party, and they played at cards; this is at present too fatiguing an amusement for me. We

[1] Louis-Antoine de Pardaillan, afterwards Duc d'Antin.

[2] Madame de Longueval.

took a walk this evening in one of the most charming spots in the world, and at seven o'clock the poor *wet pullet* ate her chicken, and chattered a little with her dear child: the more I see of others, the more I love you. I have thought a great deal of the sketch of devotion you drew with M. de La Vergne, and have myself fancied the remainder of this fabulous conversion; what you told me of it, the other day, ought surely to be printed. I am pleased the *worthy* is not with us; he would have made but an indifferent figure: without drinking the waters, this place is very dull; there is a confusion here that is far from being agreeable, and less so to him than to any other person.

It is reported here, that we have taken Bouchain as happily as Condé, and that, notwithstanding the feints of the Prince of Orange, he will certainly attempt nothing; that is some comfort to me[1]. The good St. Géran has sent me her compliments from La Palice. I have entreated them all not to mention a word to me about the short distance it is from here to Lyons; that is a grief to me; and as I do not wish to put my virtue to the greatest and most dangerous trial it can sustain, I will not cherish a thought of this kind, whatever it may cost my heart to banish it.

I wait for your letters here with great impatience, and when I am absent from you, my dear, writing to you is my only pleasure; and should even the physicians, at whom, by the bye, I laugh in my sleeve, forbid me this, I should in my turn forbid them to eat or drink, or breathe, to see how they would relish that regimen.

Let me hear some news about my little girl, and if she is reconciled to her convent yet; let me know likewise, if M de La Garde returns to Paris this winter; I must own, that if, by some unforeseen accident, I should be

[1] It was considered as a great fault, that the French did not give battle. Louvois prevented it, and his enemies said he wished to prolong the war. The fact is, that the pride of Louis XIV. would not allow him to hazard uncertain success. This was not the case, since the Prince of Orange himself wished to give battle, and was only restrained by the Spaniards.

deprived of the pleasure of seeing you, it would make me half mad. The word *plague*, that I see in your letter, makes me tremble. I should be very apprehensive of an epidemic of that kind in such a climate as Provence. I pray God to avert such a scourge from a place where he has fixed you. What misery it is that we should be doomed to pass our days at such a distance from each other, when our affection draws us together so closely!

Wednesday, 20th May.

Well, I have taken the waters this morning, my dear; ah, they are horridly disagreeable! I called on *le chanoine*; she does not lodge with Madame de Brissac. The company go at six o'clock to the spring; there we all assemble, and drink, and make wry faces; for only figure to yourself that they are boiling-hot, and have a very nauseous taste of sulphur. We walk to and fro, we chat, we go to mass, we work off the waters, and everyone speaks, without hesitation, of the effect they produce: thus the time passes till noon: we then go to dinner, and, after dinner, pay visits. This has been my day to see company. Madame de Brissac played at ombre with St. Hérem and Planci: *le chanoine* and myself read Ariosto; she is very fond of Italian, and likes me exceedingly. Two or three young ladies of the neighbourhood came with a flute, and danced a *bourée* very prettily: but to finish my account; at five o'clock, we take a walk in a delightful country; at seven, we eat a light supper, and at ten, retire to rest. So now you know as much of the matter as myself.

I find the waters agree very well with me. I drank a dozen glasses; they purge me a little, which is all that is required of them. I shall bathe in a few days. I shall write to you every evening; this is a consolation to me; and my letters will go when it pleases a certain little post-boy to call for them, who brings the letters and sets out a quarter of an hour afterwards. Mine shall be always ready for him.

The Abbé Bayard is just come from his pretty house to pay me a visit. He is the *Druid Adamas* of this country.

Thursday, 21st May.

Our little post-boy has just arrived, covered with mud, but has brought me no letters from you. I have one from Coulanges, one from honest d'Hacqueville, and one from the Princesse de Tarente, who is at Bourbon. They have allowed her only to make her court for a quarter of an hour; her affairs will go on swimmingly; she wishes for me at Paris, but I think myself very well where I am.

The waters have done me a great deal of good to-day. I fear nothing but the bath. Madame de Brissac had the colic to-day; she lay in bed, looked very handsome, and was dressed in a manner fit to make conquests. Oh, I wish you had but seen how prettily she managed her pains, and her eyes, and her arms, and her cries, with her hands lying on the quilt; and the sympathy she expected from all the by-standers. I was so taken up with this scene, and thought it so excellent, that the stupid posture I stood in, did me, I believe, no little credit with her; for it seemed as if I was petrified with sorrow for her sufferings; and only think that this fine scene was played off purposely for the Abbé Bayard, St. Hérem, Monjeu, and Planci! In truth, child, when I think of the simplicity of your conduct in your illness, I look upon you as a downright ignoramus; the calmness that sits upon your sweet face! In short, what a difference! I cannot but smile at the camparison.

As to myself, I eat my soup with my left hand by way of novelty. I hear of the good fortune of Bouchain, and that the King is to return soon; I suppose that His Majesty will not come alone. You asked me the other day respecting M. Courtin; he has set out for England, and I suppose his companion has now nothing more to do than to adore his fair one, you know who, without envy and without a rival.

LETTER 418

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Vichy, Sunday, May 24, 1676.

I am really enchanted when I receive your letters; they are so delightfully entertaining, that I cannot bear the thoughts of enjoying the pleasure of reading them alone; but be not alarmed, I shall commit no folly: I show Bayard one line, and *le chanoine* another; ah, *le chanoine* would suit you to a tittle! Let me assure you, that every one is delighted with your style. I only show just as much as is proper, and you may be sure I keep the letters too much in my own power, to suffer anyone to read what I do not wish to have seen, by peeping over my shoulders. I have written to you several times, both upon the road and from here. You will have seen all I say, all I do, and all I think, and even the conformity of our opinions relative to the marriage of M. de La Garde. I cannot but admire how much our understanding is the dupe of our hearts, and the plausible reasons we find to defend a change of sentiments. The Coadjutor's, I think, is admirable, but the way in which you tell it is still more so: I have always a strong inclination to laugh, when you write me anything about the honest du Parc; nothing, I conceive, can be more diverting, than to see him persuading himself that he alone can work miracles, though, as you say, the greatest miracle would be, to persuade you of the truth of it.

I am very glad that my dear little girl is content and happy, I was afraid her little heart would break. It is certain that the journey from here to Grignan is a mere nothing; but then you cannot persuade me, my dear, that from Grignan to Lyons is such a trifle; it is a very fatiguing journey, and I should be very sorry if you attempted it, to go back again directly. I am steadfast in my opinion, you see. If you were one of those who are easily per-

suaded, and carried away here and there as others pleased, why, I might have had some hopes of bringing you along with me; but you are of a very different stamp; I am convinced I have no complaisance of that kind to expect from you, and therefore rest satisfied that you should keep your love and your money to bring you up next winter, and give me the happiness and consolation of embracing you. If, indeed, I were to fall ill here, which by the way there is not the least danger of, I should certainly write for you to come to me with all possible expedition; but at present I am very well. I drink like a fish every morning; I am a little like Nouveau indeed, who used to ask, "Am I not very happy?" So I ask, "Do not the waters work off well? Are they not right in quantity and quality? Is not everything as it should be?" I am told that I do wonders, and I believe it, because I feel it; for excepting my hands and knees, which are not quite as they should be, because I have never been pumped on or bathed yet, I am as well as could possibly be expected.

Our walks are delightful beyond description, and are alone sufficient to restore me to my health. We are all day long together. Madame de Brissac and *le chanoine* dine here very familiarly, and as everyone eats plainly, there is no show of an entertainment at any of our tables. After that admirable farce of the colic, we had a recovery-piece exhibited with all its concomitant languishings, short breathings, etc., which was really worthy of the stage; but it would take up a whole volume to describe all that I have found out in this master-piece of the gods. I pass slightly over a number of things, that I may not write too much. You make me laugh with your account of the saint who is fallen from the skies upon you at Aix, and who stands in so much need of bodily purification: he must certainly have his relicts at his finger-ends: those *living relicts,* as you call his vermin, shocked me; for, as I used always to be called at St. Marie's [1], the living relict, I fancied myself in M. Ribon's situation.

[1] Madame de Sévigné was called by this name among the Sisters

I am perfectly overwhelmed with presents by the good people here; this, it seems, is the custom of the country, where we may live almost for nothing: two fowls for three pennies, and everything else in proportion. There are three good men here, whose whole study is to oblige me; these are Bayard, St. Hérem, and La Fayette; as I frequently make you pay my debts, I desire you will remember to say a word or two of them in your next.

Adieu, my angel, continue to love me dearly, and be assured that you do not love one who is ungrateful.

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*LETTER 419

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to the Comte* DE BUSSY.

Vichy, May 25, 1676.

When I heard of your permission to go to Paris, I felt the most lively emotions, and I ran with Corbinelli to rejoice with Madame de Bussy upon the event. But she had moved: I expected every moment that you would come, and that I should see you enter my apartment: but you came not, and I set out for this place to recover my health, the loss of which has afflicted both you and me. You do well to congratulate me on your recall, for I think I shall be much more glad to see you again, than you would be to see me. In this hope I shall swallow two doses of water at a time, in order to expedite my return to Paris, where I already embrace you in anticipation. I entreat my niece de Coligny to believe that I love and esteem her. I dare not write, for it is almost death to me, and I must therefore conclude, that you may not lose a cousin who is very much attached to you.

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of the Visitation, on account of her grand-mother, the Baroness of Chantal, who founded that convent, and whom they considered as a saint.

LETTER 420

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Vichy, Tuesday, May 26, 1676.

I ought to receive more of your letters from Paris; they will be heartily welcome, my dear child, whenever they please to arrive; you have not a just idea of the state of my health: do you not know that I have preserved my legs, and that I can walk very well? I have still a few slight pains in my arms, knees, and shoulders, but the pump will remove them all. I look well, eat well, and sleep well, and am so free from humours, that I shall continue the waters only a fortnight longer, for fear of overheating my blood. To-morrow I begin the pump, and you may depend upon hearing regularly from me. Do not scold me for writing, it is the only pleasure I have, and I manage my time so as not to suffer from it. Do not deprive me of a syllable respecting yourself: you say such kind things to me, so affectionate, so good, and so true, that I can only answer them by what I feel. I do not repent that I did not let you come here, though my heart suffers by it; for when I reflect upon your taking all that trouble to be only a week or ten days with me, I think I shall be much better pleased to see you next winter. I am so attached to you that I feel the pangs of separation more keenly than any other person; and I have therefore been governed by my weakness, without listening to my strong desire of seeing you, and my happiness in having that desire gratified.

I do not intend to remain here more than a week longer. The Duchess will go before that time, and the pretty *chanoine*; she goes to Bayard's because I am to be there: he would be as well pleased to be without her: there will be a little troop of *infelici amanti* (unhappy lovers). You lose too much the power of making conquests, my dear child; this is a circumstance you cannot

but regret; you should see the havoc that is made here, without distinction, and without appeal. I beheld, with my own eyes, a poor Celestin burnt to tinder the other day; judge how strongly this reminded me of you. There are some very pretty women here: yesterday they danced some of their country *bourées,* which are really extremely graceful: they are very quick, and are not deficient in *dégognades*: if these dances were introduced at Versailles in masquerades, their novelty would please, for they are very superior to the Bohemian dances. There was a great boy disguised as a woman, who diverted me extremely: his petticoat was continually in the air, and he displayed a pair of handsome legs underneath it.

I have made myself of consequence here by the news of our sea-fight[1]. As we wept for the Chevalier de Tambonneau, the last time he was killed, there is no occasion to do it now, I think.

Adieu, my dearest child; repose yourself in your charming Castle, where I should rejoice to be this summer; but do not speak of it to me. I never knew what it was to have virtue but on this occasion.

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*LETTER 421

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Vichy, Thursday, May 28, 1676.

I have just received two letters from you; one comes from Paris, and the other from Lyons. You are deprived of a great pleasure in never having your own letters to read: I know not where you obtain all you say, but you write with a grace and propriety that I meet with no

[1] This was the second engagement between Ruyter and Duquesne. It took place on the 22nd of March, to the north-east of Mount Gibel or Etna: the event of the battle was doubtful; but Holland sustained an irreparable loss. Ruyter was mortally wounded. Louis XIV. gained himself great honour by publicly regretting the loss of his illustrious enemy.

where else. You judge well in believing that I write without effort, and that my hands are better: they will not yet close, and the palms and fingers are very much swollen. This makes me tremble, and gives a very ill grace to my hands and arms; but one circumstance that consoles me a little is, that I hold my pen without difficulty. I began the operation of the pump to-day; it is no bad rehearsal of purgatory. The patient is naked in a little subterraneous apartment, where there is a tube of hot water, which a woman directs wherever you choose. This state of nature, in which you have scarcely a fig-leaf of clothing, is very humiliating. I wished my two women to be with me, that I might see some one I knew. Behind a curtain a person is stationed to support your courage for half an hour; a physician of Ganat fell to my lot, whom Madame de Noailles always takes with her, whom she likes extremely, a very genteel young man neither a quack nor a bigot, and whom she sent me from pure friendship. I shall retain him, though it should cost me my hat; the physicians here are unbearable, and this man amuses me. He is not a low mean wretch, neither is he an *Amonio*; he has wit and honesty, and he knows the world: in short I am perfectly satisfied. He talked to me the whole time I was under execution: think of a spout of boiling water pouring upon one or other of your poor limbs! It is at first applied to every part of the body, in order to rouse the animal spirits, and then to the joints affected; but when it comes to the nape of the neck, the heat creates a surprise which it is impossible to describe. This, however, is the main point. It is necessary to suffer, and we do suffer; we are not quite scalded to death, and are then put into a warm bed where we sweat profusely, and this is the cure. My physician is still very kind to me; for instead of leaving me for two hours to the tediousness inseparable from such a situation, I make him read to me, and that amuses me. This is the life I shall lead for seven or eight days, during which I expected to drink the waters also; but this, I am told, would be too much, my stay, therefore,

will be rather longer than I expected. It was to bid adieu to my rheumatism, by making the last lather for it, that I was sent here. I find it was necessary. It is like taking a new lease of life and health, and if I could see and embrace you once more in the tenderness and joy of my heart, you might perhaps still call me your *bellissima madre* (most beautiful mother), and I should not renounce the title of *mère-beauté* (mother-beauty), with which M. de Coulanges has honoured me. In short, my child, it depends on you to restore me to all my dignities.

I have felt the twenty-fourth [1] of this month very painfully; and have marked it by too tender recollections: such days are not easily forgotten: but it would be still more cruel not to see me again, and to refuse me the satisfaction of being with you, merely to prevent me from having the grief of bidding you adieu. I conjure you, my child, to reason differently, and to suffer d'Hacqueville and me to manage the time of your absence, so that you may be at Grignan a sufficient time, and yet have enough to come here. What obligation shall I not owe you, if you think of making up to me next summer for what you have refused me in this! It is true that seeing you for only a fortnight appeared to me an afflicting circumstance for us both; and I thought it wiser to let you keep all your strength for this winter, since it is certain that, the extra expenses of Provence being now at an end, you would not incur greater at Paris: but I have in no way relinquished the hope of seeing you, for I own that I feel it necessary for the preservation of my health and my life. You say nothing of the *pigeon*: is he still timid? Did you not understand what I told you upon that subject? Mine was not at Bouchain; he was a spectator of the two armies ranged so long in order of battle. This is the second time that only the trifling circumstance of fighting was wanting; but as two quarrels are equal to a combat, I suppose that twice within musket-shot is equal to a battle. Be this

[1] The 24th day of May 1675, was the day on which she parted from Madame de Grignan at Fontainebleau.

as it may, the hope of seeing the Baron gay and cheerful, has spared me much uneasiness. It is a great happiness that the Prince of Orange was not affected with the pleasure and honour of being vanquished by such a hero as ours. You must have heard how our warriors, friends and enemies, visited *nell' uno, nell' altro campo,* (in both camps), and sent presents to each other.

I am informed that Maréchal de Rochefort is certainly dead at Nancy, having fallen a victim, not to the sword, but to a fever. Do you not like the idea of the little chimney-sweepers [1]? we were tired of Cupids. If the Mesdames de Buous are with you, pray give my compliments to them, and particularly to the mother: mothers are entitled to this distinction. Madame de Brissac is going soon; she made sad complaints to me the other day of your coldness to her. The good d'Escars and I stay here to complete our cure. Say something for me to tell her: you cannot imagine how attentive she is to me. I have not told you how much you are celebrated here by the good Saint-Hérem, Bayard, Brissac, and Longueval. D'Hacqueville sends me word constantly of Mademoiselle de Méri's health: they would be very much alarmed if she were to have the fever, but I hope she will escape as she has so often done before. I am ordered to take chicken-broth every day; nothing is more simple, nor more refreshing: I wish you would take some, to prevent your being burnt up at Grignan. You are very facetious upon the handsome physician of Chelles. The story of the two thrusts with a sword to weaken his man, is very well applied. I am still uneasy about the health of our Cardinal; he exhausts himself with reading. Good heavens! had he not read everything that was to be read? I am delighted, my child, when you speak of your affection for me: I assure you, you cannot believe too firmly, that you constitute all the happiness, all the pleasure, and all the sorrow, of my life.

[1] She alludes to a paper fan which she sent to Madame de Grignan by the Chevalier de Buous.

LETTER 422

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Vichy, Monday evening, June 1, 1676.

Away with you, my lady Comtesse! to have the assurance to desire me not to write to you! I would have you know, that it is one of the greatest pleasures I can enjoy. A very pretty regimen you are for prescribing me: but I desire you will leave me to indulge this inclination as I please, since I am always so ready to submit to you in every other respect. But in truth, my dear, I take my own time, and the way in which you interest yourself, with regard to my health, is the very thing that would induce me to take the greatest care of it.

Your reflections on the sacrifices we are obliged to make to reason are very just, in our present situations: it is undoubtedly true, that the love of God is the only thing that can render us happy, both in this world and the other; this has often been said before, but you have given a turn to the expression, which has struck me forcibly. The death of Maréchal de Rochefort is a noble subject for meditation. For an ambitious man, whose ambition is satisfied, to die at the age of forty, is a deplorable circumstance! When he was dying, he entreated the Comtesse de Guiche to fetch his wife from Nancy, and he left to her the care of comforting her; which I do not conceive can easily be done, considering in how many ways she is a loser[1]. I send a letter from Madame de La Fayette, which will amuse you. Madame de Brissac came hither for a certain disorder, called the colic, but not having found much relief, has left Bayard's to-day, after having dressed, danced, and squandered away, at a furious rate.

The *chanoine* has written to me; I fancy I thawed

[1] Louvois undertook this office: he fell in love with her, and remained so to the end of his life.

her ice by my coldness. I know her perfectly well, and the surest way to please her, is never to ask any thing of her. Madame de Brissac and she make the prettiest contrast of fire and water that I ever beheld. I should like to see this same Duchess laying about her in your *Place des Prêcheurs*[1] without any respect to age or condition; it exceeds everything that can be imagined. You are an oddity, child: let me tell you, she would live very well where you would starve with hunger.

But a word or two about this charming pump. I have already given you a description of it: I am now at my fourth operation, and am to continue to eight. My perspirations are so profuse, that they wet the mattresses under me; I really think all the liquids I have drank ever since I came into the world must have remained in me till now. When I am in bed, there is really no bearing it; my head, my whole body, is in motion; my spirits are all in arms, and my heart beats violently. Here I lie for a whole hour without opening my mouth, while the sweat is coming on, which lasts for two hours at a time; and to prevent my losing all patience, I make my physician read to me: the man pleases me very much, I assure you, and I believe he would also please you. I have put him upon studying Descartes' philosophy, and repeat to him some things I remember to have heard from you. He is a man of good education, and knows the world; he is no quack I can tell you, but unites the gentleman with the physician; in a word, he is very entertaining.

I shall soon be left alone here, but that gives me no concern, provided they do not deprive me of the charming landscape, the river Allier, the thousand little woods, the brooks, the meadows, the sheep, the goats, and the peasant girls, who dance the *bourée* upon the green. I consent to bid adieu to the rest, the country alone would cure me. The sweats which weaken every one else, give me fresh strength, which is a sufficient proof that my disorders proceeded from a redundancy of humours. My knees are

[1] A public place in the town of Aix.

much better; my hands indeed are still a little refractory, but they too will come round in time. I shall continue to drink the waters till a week after Corpus Christi Day, and then I must submit to the mortifying reflection of removing to a greater distance from you. I own it would give me real satisfaction to have you here entirely to myself; but you have inserted a clause respecting every one's returning to their own home again, that makes me shudder: but no more of this subject, my dear child, it is all over. Do all in your power to come and see me this winter. I must say that I think you ought to wish to do it, and that M. de Grignan ought likewise to wish you to give me that gratification.

I must tell you, that you do the waters of this place injustice in supposing them to be black; no, no, they are not black; hot, indeed, they are. Your Provence gentry would relish this beverage very indifferently; but if you put a leaf or flower into these waters, it comes out as fresh as when first gathered; they are so far from parching the skin, or making it rough, that they render it smoother and softer than before: now reason upon that. Adieu, my dear child; if it was requisite to the drinking of these waters, that I should not love my daughter, I would renounce them instantly.

LETTER 423

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Vichy, Thursday, June 4, 1676.

To-day I have finished the use of the pump and the sweating: I believe that in the space of eight days, not less than ten quarts of water have been extracted from my poor body. I am persuaded nothing else could have done me so much good; and I look upon myself now as insured

from rheumatisms for the rest of my life. The being pumped upon and the sweating are certainly dreadful for the time; but then there is a certain half hour when we feel dry and refreshed, and take chicken broth, which I cannot rank in the number of innocent pleasures; for it is a state of luxurious enjoyment. My physician kept up my spirits; I amused myself with him by talking of you; he was deserving of it. He left me to-day, but is to return again, for he is fond of good society, and since the departure of the Duchess de Noailles, he has not found himself so well off as at present. To-morrow I am to take a gentle purgative, then to drink the waters for a week, and all is over. My knees are nearly well, but I cannot yet close my hand. There is a Madame de La Baroir here, who stammers so dreadfully with the palsy, that she is quite an object of pity; but when we see her ugly, old, dressed to the height of the fashion, with a fly-cap upon a half-bald pate, and reflect, that after having been two and twenty years a widow, she fell violently in love with M. de La Baroir, who was paying his addresses publicly to another, that she gave this man every centime she had in the world, and that he has never slept with her but a quarter of an hour since they have been married, and then merely to legalise the marriage, and secure her property, and afterwards turned her headlong out of the house; (what a long-winded period is this!) when we consider all this, I say, we have a strange inclination to spit in her face.

We hear that Madame de Péquigny [1] is coming here likewise; she is the Cumæan Sybil. She is seeking a cure for seventy-three, an age that sits somewhat uneasily upon her. This place will become a perfect bedlam soon. Yesterday I myself put a rose into the hot well, where it soaked for a long time, and on taking it out, it was as fresh as when upon the bush: I put another into a saucepan of boiling water, and it was in a jelly, in an instant. This experiment, which I had often heard mentioned, afforded me

[1] Claire-Charlotte d'Ailly, mother of Charles d'Albert, Duc de Chaulnes.

a good deal of pleasure. The waters are certainly miraculous.

I intend to send you, by a little priest who is going to Aix, a book which is universally read, and which has amused me highly; it is entitled, *The History of the Viziers,* in which you will meet with the wars of Hungary and Candie, and in the person of the Grand Vizier [1] whom you have heard so much extolled, and who still reigns, you will find a man so perfect, that I think no Christian can surpass him. God preserve Christianity. You will likewise meet with some accounts of the valour of the King of Poland [2], which are not known, and are truly worthy of admiration. I am now impatiently expecting letters from you, and so I gossip in the meantime. Do not be afraid that I shall ever receive any injury from it; there is no danger in writing at night.

Well! my dear lovely child, I have just received your letter of the tenth of May. There are some passages in it which make me laugh till the tears come into my eyes: that, where you say you cannot find a word for Madame de La Fayette, is admirable. I think you are so much in the right, that I cannot conceive how I could ask such a needless thing of you; perhaps it was in the transport of my gratitude for the good wine that smelled of the cask: you were always ready to throw her in a *supposé,* and some other word which I do not now recollect. I am charmed that our *pigeon* may some day have the figure of a Grignan; you represent him as very pretty and very amiable; you were causelessly alarmed at his bashfulness; his education will be an amusement to you, and will prove the happiness of his future life: you take the right method to make him a good man. You now see the advantage of putting him into breeches; they are mere girls while they continue in petticoats.

You are not yet satisfied about my hands, you say, my dearest child; I can almost do what I will with them

[1] Achmet Coprogli Pacha, who died in December, 1676.

[2] Jean Sobieski.

now, only that I cannot close them farther than is necessary for holding my pen; for the palms do not seem to have any inclination to *unswell*. What think you of these agreeable relics of the rheumatism? The Cardinal (de Retz) wrote me word the other day, that the physicians have given the disorder in his head the title of a rheumatism of the membranes, what a name! I had nearly burst into tears at the bare mention of the word rheumatism.

You seem to be very well off this summer in your Castle. M. de La Garde is no small addition to your society, and I am persuaded you think so, and take advantage of it. I think I did very wisely in saving you the fatigue of a journey to Vichy, and myself the pain of bidding you adieu again, almost as soon as you arrived. But I flatter myself with the hopes of going to Grignan another year; I wish to see you in your Castle with all the Grignans there are in the world; there can never be too many. I have a tender remembrance of my last visit, which bids fair for a second journey as soon as I am able to undertake it. I absolutely laughed, though against my inclination, at the news honest d'Hacqueville sent you of the engagement at sea; it was like sending me news from Rennes, when I was at *The Rocks*: but pray look out for somebody else to join you in laughing at him; you know the vow I took when he sent me Davonneau's [1] letter, which restored me to life.

What say you of Maréchal de Lorges? He is Captain of the Gardes du Corps; the two brothers are become twins [2]. Mademoiselle de Frémont is really very well married, and M. de Lorges too: I am heartily rejoiced at it for the sake of the Chevalier (de Grignan); the more his friend is advanced, the more he will have it in his power to serve him. Madame de Coulanges writes me word that she has heard that Madame de Brissac is cured, and keeps the waters of Vichy upon her stomach:

[1] See Letter 393, of March 1st, 1676, in this volume.

[2] Maréchal de Duras and Maréchal de Lorges were both Captains in the Gardes du Corps at the same time.

so much for our good little friend. You have struck the good Abbé all of a heap with talking about not resuming your apartment in Paris: alas! my dear child, I keep it, and delight in it on no other account: in God's name, do not think of taking up your abode any where but under my roof. I perfectly adore the Abbé for what he has written to me on that subject, and for the desire he shows of my receiving so dear and agreeable a companion there. Adieu, my dear; I embrace you a thousand and a thousand times, with a tenderness that ought to please you, if you really love me. Present my best compliments to M. de La Garde, and to M. de Grignan; particularly to the first on his nuptials. Kiss the *pigeons* for me; I am delighted at the sprightliness of Pauline, but will the *little little one*[1] absolutely live in spite of the opinion of Hippocrates and Galen? I dare say he will prove a very extraordinary man. The *inhumanity* you give your children is one of the most convenient things in the world. Thank God there is one[2] who no longer thinks of either father or mother; ah! my dear, she never learnt that happy quality from you; you love me but too well, and I always find your thoughts occupied with me, and my health. I am afraid you have suffered too much on my account.

LETTER 424

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Vichy, Monday, June 8, 1676.

Doubt not, my child, but that it affects me painfully to be obliged to prefer anything to you who are so dear to me; all my consolation is, that you are not ignorant of my sentiments, and will find in my conduct an excellent subject, for reflecting, as you did the other day, on the preference to be given to duty over inclination. But I

[1] The child of which Madame de Grignan was delivered at the eighth month.

[2] Marie-Blanche who had been placed in a convent.

conjure you and M. de Grignan likewise, to have the goodness to comfort me this winter, for a sacrifice which has cost me so dear. If this is what is called virtue and gratitude, I no longer wonder that we find so little promptitude in exercising these noble virtues. I dare not, however, dwell long on these thoughts, they interrupt the calmness of mind enjoined to those who repair here. Let me also entreat you to consider yourself engaged to me as usual, and be assured that it is precisely what I most ardently wish for.

You are uneasy, you say, about my being pumped upon: I have borne it now for eight mornings successively; it made me sweat profusely, which is what was wished; and has been so far from weakening me, that I find myself the stronger for it. It is certain that your presence would have been a great comfort to me, but I doubt whether I should have suffered you to have stayed amidst all this smoke and vapour: my sweating, I fancy, would have a little excited your pity; but, upon the whole, I assure you, I am the admiration of the place, for having so courageously supported the operation. My knees are perfectly cured, and could I but close my hands, there would be no remains of my disorder left. I shall continue to drink the waters till Saturday, which will be my sixteenth day: they purge me, and do me a great deal of good. I am vexed that you cannot see the *bourées* of this country; it is the most surprising sight imaginable; the peasantry dance in as true time as you do, and with such an activity, a sprightliness, that, in short, I am quite in raptures with them. I have a little band of music every evening, which costs me a mere trifle, and it is perfectly enchanting to see the remains of the shepherds and shepherdesses of Lignon [1] dancing in these delightful meadows. It is impossible for me not to wish you here, with all your wisdom, a spectatress of these pleasing follies. We have the Cumæan Sybil [2] here still, so bedecked, and so gay! she thinks, poor

[1] A small river, but rendered famous by the romance of *Astræa*.

[2] Madame de Péquigny. See the preceding Letter.

soul, she is cured; which makes me pity her. I know not what might happen, if this was the Fountain of Youth.

What you say of Death taking the liberty of interrupting Fortune is admirable; this ought to comfort those who are not in the number of her favourites, and to diminish the bitterness of death. You ask me if I am religious: alas! my dear, I am not sufficiently so, for which I am very sorry; but yet I think I am somewhat detached from what is called the world. Age and sickness give us leisure enough for serious reflections; but what I retrench from the rest of the world I bestow upon you, so that I make but small advances in the path of detachment; and you know that the law of the game is to begin by effacing a little, what is dearest to our heart.

Madame de Montespan set out last Thursday from Moulins in a boat delightfully painted and gilded, and furnished with crimson damask; this magnificent little vessel had been provided for her by the Controller (M. Morant), and was ornamented with an infinite number of devices, and the colours of France and Navarre; nothing was ever more gallant; it could not have cost him less than a thousand crowns; but he was amply repaid by a letter which the fair one wrote to His Majesty on the occasion, which it is said she filled with nothing but encomiums upon its magnificence. She would not be seen by the women, but the men got a sight of her under the shadow of the Controller's countenance. She is gone down the Allier to meet the Loire at Nevers, which is to have the honour of conveying her to Tours, and from thence to Fontevrault [1], where she waits for the King's return, who is taken up at present with his warlike occupations. I fancy this preference is not very pleasing.

I shall easily comfort myself for de Ruyter's death, on account of its rendering your intended voyage more safe: is it not true, my dear Comte? You desire me to love you both; alas! what else do I do? Pray be easy on that score.

[1] Fontevrault is but one league from the river Loire.

I have told you what our little Coulanges says respecting the cure of the Duchess (de Brissac), which consists in retaining the waters of Vichy: this is pleasant enough. You find I knew all about *Guenani*[1] at the time you mentioned it to me.

I have just taken my waters, and they are half gone off again; this is Tuesday, at ten o'clock in the forenoon. As I am certain I cannot please you better than by laying down my pen, I conclude with embracing you tenderly.

LETTER 425

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Vichy, Thursday evening, June 11, 1676.

You should be welcome, my dear, to come and tell me in person that I must not write to you at five o'clock in the evening: but it is the only pleasure I have; it is the only thing that keeps me awake. If I had an inclination to take a little nap, I should only have to take the cards in my hand, for nothing so effectually puts me to sleep. If I want to keep awake, which by the bye is what I am ordered to do, I must think of you, write to you, and chat with you, about the news of Vichy: this is the true and only method of preventing all sorts of dozing or laziness in me.

This morning when I was at the well, I saw an honest Capuchin, who made me a very low bow, which I returned with equal respect on my side, for I greatly honour his dress. He began to talk to me of Provence, of you, and of M. Roquesante, and of having seen me at Aix, and of the grief you had been under on account of my in-

[1] The natural daughter of Henri Jules de Bourbon, Duc de Anguien, and of Françoise de Montalais, relict of Jean de Beüil, Comte de Marans. She was declared legitimate in June, 1692, and the 5th of March, 1696, she married Armand de l'Espars de Madaillan, Marquis de Lassai, whose third wife she was. The name of Guenani here is the anagram of *Anguien*.

disposition. I wish you had seen how much I made of the good Father, the instant I found him so well informed. I do not suppose that you have ever seen or remarked him; but he mentioned your name, and that was enough for me. The physician whom I still retain for the sake of his society, could not help wondering to see me fix myself upon the good Father. I assured him that if he were in Provence, and should tell you that he had been with me at Vichy, he would not meet with a worse reception on that account; he seemed to me impatient to go there, that he might tell you something of my health, which, my hands excepted, is now quite established, and I am persuaded you would not be sorry to embrace me in my present condition, especially as you know how I have been before. We shall see, however, whether you can still continue to dispense with the presence of those you love; or whether you will give them the pleasure of seeing you, where d'Hacqueville and I expect you.

La Péquigny has just returned unexpectedly to the spring; oh, she is a strange machine! she will do everything that I do, that she may be as well as I am. Her physicians tell her she will be so, and mine laughs at her. But notwithstanding all her follies and weaknesses, she does not want wit, and has said five or six very good things. She is the only person whom I have ever seen practise the virtue of liberality without restraint or limitation. She has two thousand five hundred louis, which she is determined to leave behind her in this place. She treats, she raffles, she dresses, she maintains the poor: ask her for a pistole, and she gives two. Things, that I have hitherto only supposed, I find realised in her. Indeed she has twenty-five thousand crowns a year, and when at Paris she only spends ten thousand. Here is some foundation for all this magnificence; but I think her very praise-worthy for adding the will to the power, two things which are almost always separated.

The good d'Escars has reminded me of what I said to the Duchess (de Brissac), the day the Celestin friar was

so smitten, at which she laughed immoderately; and as you generally expect some sincerity from me on these occasions, I will tell you what I said to her. "Really, Madame," said I, "you take good aim at the Father, you are determined not to miss him." She pretended not to understand me; upon which I told her I had seen the poor Celestin in flames: she knew it very well, but never checked herself in the pleasure of committing murders.

Friday noon.

I am just come from the well, that is to say, at nine o'clock, and the waters have performed their duty: you must not therefore be angry, my love, if I write a short answer to your letter: in God's name rely upon my care of myself, and laugh, laugh upon my report; I laugh myself whenever I can: I am a little troubled indeed with a desire to go to Grignan, where I assuredly shall not go. You have given me a plan for this summer and autumn, that would please and suit me extremely: I should then be at M. de La Garde's wedding; I should fill my place very well, and would help you to be revenged for the Livry affair: I would sing: "The wisest falls in love, and is caught he knows not how." In short, Grignan and all its inhabitants hang strangely about my heart. I assure you I perform an heroic, a very heroic action, in removing thus far from you. How I love you for remembering, so opportunely, our *Moral Essays*! I both prize and admire them. It is certain, that M. de La Garde's *myself* is going to be multiplied; so much the better, everything of his must be good. He still suits my taste as much as at Paris. I have not had the curiosity to ask any question about the lady [1]. Do you remember what I told Corbinelli one day, that a certain man was going to marry? "Is this all you know about it?" said he. I am, however, in-

[1] The marriage in question did not take place, notwithstanding things were in such forwardness. M. de La Garde was the son of Louis Escalin des Aimars, Baron de La Garde, and of Jeanne Adhémar de Monteil, aunt of M. de Grignan.

different about it, persuaded that if I had ever heard her name, you would have told me further particulars.

I return to the subject of my health, which is now perfectly restored; the waters and the pumping have evacuated a great quantity of humours. I walk now like another person; I am afraid of growing too fat again, that is all my uneasiness, for I should like to remain just as I am. My hands are still a little stiff, but the warm weather will bring them about. They want to send me to Mont d'Or, but I will not go. I now eat anything, that is to say, I might, if I were not taking the waters. I have experienced greater benefit at Vichy than anyone else has done, for there are many who can say of these baths,

> Ce bain si chaud, tant de fois éprouvé,
> M'a laissé comme il m'a trouvé [1].

For my part I should fib if I were to say so, for there is so little difference in my hands and other people's, that it is hardly worth mentioning. Pass your summer then happily, my dear: I wish I could send you two dancing girls, and two lads who play on the tabor and pipe here, for the wedding, that you might see their manner of dancing a *bourée*: the Bohemians are inelegant and tasteless compared to them. I delight in gracefulness. Do you remember how red you once made my eyes look, at seeing you dance remarkably well? I assure you, that you would receive no small pleasure, from seeing this dance performed as it is here. I must think of my letter for M. de La Garde. To-morrow I set out from here: I shall go and rest myself a while at Bayard's, and then remove to a still greater distance from the object of my tenderest love, till it shall please you to take the necessary steps for restoring joy to my heart, and health to my body, as you know the one is nearly concerned in whatever affects the other.

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[1] Though soak'd in water to the chin,
I came out—just as I went in. [Translation.]

LETTER 426

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

From the Abbé Bayard's, at Langlar,
Monday, June 15, 1676.

I arrived here on Saturday last, my dear, as I informed you I should. I took medicine yesterday, in order to acquit myself of all the ceremonials of Vichy; I am in perfect health; the warm weather will completely restore my hands; I make the yoke they have laid on me, as light and easy as possible: I begin to walk later, to resume my usual hour of going to bed, and am no longer the poor timid creature that I was. However, I manage my little skiff with prudence; and if I should steer wrong, it has only to cry out *rheumatism* to me, and I instantly return to my proper course. Would to God, my dear, that by the effect of some art, black or white, you could be transported hither for a while; you would be perfectly delighted with the virtues and hospitality of the master of the house, and would admire his courage and perseverance in converting a hideous desolate mountain into the most beautiful and delicious spot imaginable. I am sure it is a novelty that could not fail of striking you. If this mountain were at Versailles, I do not doubt, but there are some who would prize it above all the forced beauties that are there extorted from poor oppressed Nature, in the short and transitory effects of numerous fountains. The pipe and tabor call forth the fauns to dance the *bourée* of Auvergne in woods replete with odours, which remind me of yours in Provence; in short, we talk of you here, we drink your health, and here I rest my wearied limbs in ease and tranquillity. On Wednesday I shall be at Moulins, where I shall find a letter from you, without offence to the one I expect after dinner. The people in this neighbourhood are more reasonable, and well bred, than any I have met within the other Provinces; for they have seen the world, and have not forgotten it. The Abbé Bayard appears to

me to be happy, both in being and thinking himself so. But I, my dear Comtesse, cannot be happy without you: my heart is always agitated with hopes and fears, and with the dreadful apprehension of seeing my days pass away at a distance from you. Time runs and flies swiftly, and I know not how or when I shall overtake you. But I will chase these gloomy reflections, by calling to mind a remark that was made to me in Brittany of the avarice of a certain priest: "Madame," said the person to me, very innocently, "he is a man who eats the small fish all his life, that he may eat the large fish after he is dead." I thought this a pleasant stroke, and I apply it to myself in my present situation. Certain ties and considerations oblige me to feed upon small fish all my life, in the hope of having the large fish when I am dead.

The swelling of my hands has now disappeared, and as I was always in hope that heat would have the desired effect on them, it determined me to take the journey to Vichy, where the pumping and sweating have rid me of all future apprehensions of the rheumatism: this is what I aimed at, and which I have been fortunate enough to attain.

I consider myself greatly honoured by the praise M. de Grignan bestows upon my letters; I never think them good; but since you both approve them, I ask no more. I thank you for the hope you give me of seeing you this winter; I never more ardently longed to embrace you. I love the Abbé for having written to you in so tender and paternal a style: must not he, who can with difficulty support my being absent from him for only six weeks, enter deeply into the affliction I feel in passing so much of my life without you, and into the extreme desire that I have to be with you?

They say Madame de Rochefort is inconsolable. Madame de Vaubrun is still in as deep despair as at first. I will write to you from Moulins; I have not time to answer half your agreeable letter. Adieu.

LETTER 427

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

From Moulins, Thursday, June 18, 1676.

Since you will have me remove farther from you, and are weary of an answer in four days, alas! I will comply; but this is not to be done without grief, and without reflecting as we have already done, on the laws we are obliged to impose on ourselves, and the martyrdom we voluntarily suffer, by giving the preference to duty over inclination; I am a striking example of this. But I must own to you, my beloved child, that my sorrow is somewhat alleviated by the hope I carry with me of seeing you this winter.

Ruyter is dead; let the Dutch regret his loss; to me this event seems the means of giving you more liberty. Coasting voyages are disagreeable; and that which M. de Grignan has to make, is not the most convenient in the world. We will endeavour to let you rest quietly at Grignan till the month of October. It was that you might not break your rest that I was against your coming to me at Vichy, and for certain other reasons that I have already told you.

I left Langlar yesterday. The good Princesse (de Tarente) sent a servant to me to acquaint me she should be here on Tuesday the sixteenth. Bayard, with his perfect virtue, could not comprehend the absolute necessity of my setting out: he kept the servant, and assured me so strongly that the Princesse would wait for me till Wednesday, which was yesterday, and that he himself would accompany me, that I yielded to him. Accordingly, yesterday we came here, but the Princesse had set out by day-break, and had left a letter for me full of the lamentations of Jeremiah: she has returned to Vitré without seeing me, which she says truly afflicts her, and adds, that it would have been

some comfort to her, to have spoken to me; I was excessively vexed at the incident, and could absolutely have beaten Bayard. We slept at Madame Fouquet's, where a very pretty woman, a relation of hers, received us, and did the honours of the house. These poor souls are at Pomé, in a small house they have purchased, where I shall pay them a visit this afternoon. I am going to dine at St.-Marie's with M. de Montmorenci's tomb, and the little Valençais. From Pomé I shall write you a great many particulars relative to *Quanto,* which will surprise you; what will appear excellent to you is, that they will all be true, and all mysterious. Bayard is of the party; he is a second d'Hacqueville for honesty, arbitrations, and sage advice. He is an adorer of yours, and beseeches you to permit him to continue so, on account of the regard he has for me.

If you receive an answer from M. de Lorges to let you know, that people are happy when they are contented, pray let me have a sight of it: in the meantime let me tell you this man has gained by his moderation, what the other will perhaps never acquire with all the assistance of fortune. He is happy because he is contented, and he is contented because he has good sense. What you said the other day of Rochefort was as good as it was just, that in wishing for everything, he had only forgotten to wish not to die so soon. This was a stroke not to be excelled, but there would be no end of repeating everything of that kind which comes from you.

You desired to know if it be true, that the Duchess de Sault[1] was really a page: no, she was not absolutely a page; but it is true that she was so tired of remaining in the solitude of Machecoul with her mother, and thinks it so pretty to be the Duchess de Sault, that she can scarcely contain her joy, and this is what the Italians call *non può*

[1] Paule de Gondi, daughter of Pierre and Catherine de Gondi, Duchess de Retz, married March 12, 1675, to François Emmanuel de Bonne de Créqui, Duc of Lesdiguières, and the same who was afterwards called Duchess de Lesdiguières.

capire. She is very happy to be contented, and that diffuses a sort of extravagant joy over all her actions, which is no longer the fashion at Court, where everyone has his griefs, and where a smile has not appeared for several years. Her person would please you, though she is not handsome; for she is very finely formed, and is very graceful in everything she does.

I am continually in pain for our Cardinal, for he conceals all his disorders from me on account of the lively interest I take in his health: but that perpetual headache does not please me. I am very well, and only expect from warmth the free use of my hands, though they serve me as well as if nothing ailed them: I am become used to their little defects, and really begin to think that it is not so very necessary to shut one's hands; of what use is it? It is of no consequence when there is no one whose hand we wish to press. Besides, it is a small relic of the disorder, for which I have so profound a respect, that the very name of it makes me tremble. In short, my angel, give yourself no further concern about me: all that remains to make me completely happy depends upon you.

LETTER 428

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

From Pomé, Saturday, June 20, 1676.

You still upbraid me with my unkindness in not suffering you to come to Vichy: believe me, my dear child, I suffered more in that refusal than yourself, but it did not please Providence to dispose things in such a manner as to allow me that greatest of all pleasures. I was afraid of the inconvenience attendant on such a journey, which is both long and dangerous; and then the heat of the weather was another circumstance. I was afraid that this journey

would prevent another; I was afraid of parting with you; I was afraid of following you; in short, I was afraid of everything from my own weakness and affection: it was only your absence that could make me give the Abbé the preference. I was but too much taken up with the thought of our near vicinity to each other; a thought which has caused me to the full as much trouble as it has to you, and has frequently brought tears into my eyes. Thus much have I to say in justification of myself and of the truth: accept it as such, my child, and convince me of your tenderness in return, by coming to me this winter. But let us change the subject.

I have been here ever since Thursday, as I told you I should be, and to-morrow I go to Moulins, from whence I shall set out on Monday for Nevers and Paris. This is the best place in the world; the house is pleasant, and the chapel handsomely ornamented. If my poor hands should oblige me to take another journey to Vichy, I assure you I will not be guilty of the same cruelty to myself that I was last time. Corbinelli thinks me enlisted into the army of indolence; but I do not know whether the return of my health may not throw me back into my wonted rusticity. If it does, I will let you know, that you may not show me more regard than I deserve.

I commend you highly for the desire you express of seeing the poor Baron[1] settled. When I get to Paris, I will study how to second your good intentions. Do you not think we are very fortunate in having such a quiet campaign? I am sadly afraid of a detachment for Germany. I find you are not in absolute ignorance of De Ruyter's death, nor of poor Penautier's[2] imprisonment. I shall get to Paris time enough to inform you more particularly about these tragical events. I heartily wish your little river may furnish you with water enough to bathe

[1] Monsieur de Sévigné, her son.

[2] Penautier, Receiver General of the Clergy, the friend of Madame de Brinvilliers, was accused of having put her secrets in practice, and it cost him half his property to suppress these accusations.

yourself coolly and commodiously, for they have a strange method of bathing at Vichy.

Moulins, Sunday evening, June 21.

What happiness, my dear child, to receive your letter of the seventeenth, as soon as I arrived from Pomé, where I left the two saints[1]! I have brought Mademoiselle de Fouquet with me, who does the honours of her mother's house in this place; she is to return to-morrow morning, when I shall set out for Nevers.

You judge extremely well of the *me* in the *Moral Essays*. It is certain, as old Chapelain observed, that there is a tincture of the ridiculous in that expression: the rest of the work is far too grave for such foppery, but we make a very good use of it. You describe Grignan to me as surprisingly beautiful; well, am I to blame when I assert, that M. de Grignan, with all his mildness, does exactly as he pleases? In vain we cried out, Poverty; the furniture, pictures, chimney-pieces, all went on at the same rate: I do not doubt that every thing is as complete as possible; that is not what we contend for, but where did he find all the money for this? My child, he must certainly study the black art. Let me conjure you not to disappoint me this winter; I can suffer no inconvenience so great as that of being without you: no, in this case, my courage would quite fail me. As to my hands, they are as yet *unshuttable*; but I eat, and I have the use of them enough not to be at a loss for anything. I have lost my sick looks, and am *bellissima,* which you will hardly believe.

You are continually gaining victories upon your seas: I am persuaded d'Hacqueville will send you back your account, for certainly he can never suffer anyone else should be the first to tell him a piece of news. You diverted me highly in what you said of Maréchal de Vivonne, and the foresight which procured him that dignity. Corbinelli is delighted at his good fortune. The Abbé Bayard

[1] Mesdames Fouquet.

is still with me here, and stays with me as long as he can. He is greatly struck with your merit. He is a friend, let me tell you, of no small consequence, and kisses your hand a thousand times. Mesdames Fouquet have charged me with their holy compliments for you. Adieu, my beautiful, charming child, I quit you to go and entertain my company. I will write to you upon the road.

LETTER 429

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

From Briare, Wednesday, June 24, 1676.

I am quite uncomfortable, my dear child, at being so long without writing to you. I wrote twice from Moulins; but it is a great way from here to Moulins. I now begin to date my letters at the distance you wish. Monday next we set out from this good town: we have had very hot weather. I am sure your little river must be almost dried up, since our fine Loire is so in many places. I wonder how Madame de Montespan and the Princesse de Tarente managed; they must certainly have slid along upon the sand. We set out at four o'clock in the morning, we rest a long time at dinner, we sleep upon straw, and the cushions of our coach, to avoid the inconveniences of the season. I am now become as nobly idle as yourself, through mere excess of heat; and I could keep you company in chatting upon a bed, as long as there was ground for it to stand upon. My head is full of the beauties of your apartments, you have been a long time describing them to me. I fancy that upon the same bed you will explain to me those follies which proceed from defects of the mind, and of which I almost doubt. I am always ready to place, in the first rank of good or bad, what comes from that quarter; the rest I think supportable, and sometimes even excusable; the sentiments of the heart appear to me

alone worthy of consideration, and for their sake I forgive everything; this is a foundation for comfort and reward to us: it is therefore only through an apprehension of a deficiency in this respect that we are pained by many things.

But a word or two more respecting your fine pictures, and the extraordinary death of Raphael d'Urbin [1]; this is what I should never have suspected, any more than I did the violent heat we have had: for I have remarked for these ten years that we could bear a fire very well on midsummer day, and trusting to that have been deceived. The physicians term the present refractoriness of my hands, a remain of the rheumatism, which is not easily persuaded: but we have warmth enough now to set us right in this respect. My pores are so opened by continual perspiration, that I am perpetually in a bath, and the good d'Escars does not dare propose to me to throw off my clothes, because she says, she knows I am fond of sweating. Indeed I still fancy myself cold when I am not extremely hot, but this will vanish with the *wet pullet,* which is every day taking leave of me. We expect to be at Vaux on Friday, and to spend a divine evening there, but I fear we shall not reach it till Saturday; however, I shall still continue writing to you, which is my only pleasure.

Madame de La Fayette has written me word that *Guenani* has returned to Maubuisson, and that she is agreeable without being handsome: she is sprightly, genteel, complaisant, vain, and foolish; do you know her again, you who have been one of her most intimate acquaintance? I do not know why you say that story has got air, I never heard it mentioned by anyone, and it will prove false, as a thousand other things have done. His Majesty's love of war, may possibly produce that effect. Poor plain friendship is much more durable; it is certain that the

[1] This celebrated painter died at the age of thirty-seven, of an intemperate indulgence with his mistress, which he concealed from his physicians, who, mistaking his case, killed him by venesection. The hope of being made a Cardinal induced him to persist in this fatal concealment.

words *eternal passion* quite frightened a certain beauty of the last age; and as a poor lover was protesting to her, thinking to do wonders, that he would love her all her life, she declared this was the very reason why she would not accept him, for that nothing was so dreadful to her as the thought of being loved long by the same person. You see how opinions differ.

A relation of the Abbé Bayard's, who was with us at Langlar, would have been a very worthy object of her admiration if he had lived in her time; she could have met with nothing like him in all her travels; he neither says nor does anything awkwardly, is young and handsome, dances the *bourée,* and makes little songs with surprising facility. An ugly woman came to Bayard's, who is suspected of being a coquette: the little man immediately wrote these lines, which Bayard gave to me:

C*** n'est pas mal-habile,
Quand il s'agit de prendre un cœur;
Si ce n'est celui du Pupille,
C'est celui de son gouverneur [1].

He has composed many others equally sprightly, but you have no taste, I believe, for things of this kind. It is abusing your patience, therefore, to write them; and seems as if I took your affection and leisure for granted. But I have no news to tell you. What you say of the King's foresight with regard to *Quanto's* brother [2] is an admirable subject for meditation. I meditate also very frequently on the joyful hope I have of seeing you at Paris.

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[1] C***, though skillful in gaining a heart,
Is unwilling to brook a disaster;
And if the pupil's she cannot secure,
Is contented with that of the master. [Translation.]

[2] M. de Vivonne.

LETTER 430

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Nemours, Friday, June 26, 1676.

I defy your Provence to be more on fire than this country; we have the misery besides to be without the hope of a cool wind. We travel, as it were, all night, and sweat all day. Yesterday my horses seemed to express a strong desire of resting themselves at Montargis; accordingly we stayed there the remainder of the day. We got in about eight in the morning. It is very delightful to see the day break, and to welcome it in with appropriate sonnets. We spent the evening at Madame de Fiennes', who is Gouvernante of this town, and of her husband, though he, poor man, is called the Governor: she came to fetch me at my inn, and talked of the time when she did you the honour of her approbation: you know her air, and dictatorial manner; she is superbly lodged. This is a very pretty establishment; she reigns here for three or four months, and then goes to lick the dust at the feet of the Grandees, as you know. She told me she expected Mademoiselle de Fiennes, and that she had heard La Brinvilliers had impeached a number of persons, and named the Chevalier de B*****, Mesdames de Cl****, and de G****, as having poisoned MADAME; that is all[1]. I believe all this to be false; but it is very unpleasant and vexatious to be obliged to clear one's self of such accusations. This she-devil has strongly accused Penautier, who is thrown into prison beforehand; this affair takes up all the attention of Paris, to the prejudice of the news from the army. When I get there, you may depend upon my leaving no-

[1] These initials can designate no other than the Chevalier de Beuvron, one of the favourites of Monsieur, Madame de Clérembault, governess of his children, and Madame de Grancey, who passed for his mistress. No one of these three persons was seriously suspected of this pretended poison. (See the following Letter.)

thing undone, to give you certain information how things go in this extraordinary affair.

We shall sleep to-night at the Castle of Fontainebleau, for I detest the Golden Lion ever since I parted with you there; but I hope to make matters up with it when I go there to meet you. I have been thinking of your journey, and shall give you my advice, which I hope you will follow; we have time enough before us, and will not talk of it now. I am very glad, since the weather proves so hot, that I left you quiet in my private room at Grignan; you would have been dead to have gone back at this season. If St.-Hérem [1] is at his house in the Castle, and should have learnt any news there, I may write to you again, perhaps this evening; but in my present uncertainty I write to you from here, lest I should have nothing left but to go to bed when I get there, for it will be very late, and it is your pleasure that I should take care of myself.

LETTER 431

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, July 1, 1676.

I arrived here on Sunday, my dear. I slept at Vaux, intending to refresh myself at the beautiful fountain there, and to sup upon a couple of new-laid eggs; see the difference. The Comte de Vaux [2] had heard of my arrival, and provided an excellent supper for me; and all the fountains were silent and without a drop of water, being under repair: this little mistake in my reckoning made me smile. The Comte de Vaux has merit, and the Chevalier (de Grignan) has told me that he does not know a more truly brave man. Praises of this nature do not come from the *petit glorieux* at random. The Comte and I had a great

[1] M. de St. Hérem was Governor of the Castle of Fontainebleau.

[2] The eldest son of M. Fouquet, Chief Controller of the Finances.

deal of conversation respecting the present situation of his affairs, and what they had formerly been. I told him, for his comfort, that as favour would no longer have any share in the approbation he would meet with, he might place it wholly to the account of his own merit, which would render the pleasure infinitely more sensible and pure: I know not whether he liked my rhetoric.

At length we arrived here, where I found at my gate Mesdames de Villars, de St.-Géran, and d'Heudicourt, who asked me *when I was expected,* for they were, at that instant, come to inquire. A moment afterwards came M. de La Rochefoucauld, Madame de La Sablière by chance, the Coulanges, Sanzei, and d'Hacqueville; so there we were all assembled, while the drops trickled down our cheeks, not tears, but perspiration: the thermometers were never known so high. I have got such a knack of sweating, that I am always in this state, and am obliged to shift myself three or four times a day. The *worthy* was overjoyed to see me returned, and, not knowing how to make enough of me, told me he wished I might soon experience a pleasure equal to his. I have received numerous visits these two days, and have extolled the virtues of the waters of Vichy, and their salutary effects; if ever old de Lorme takes leave of the company, the Maréchale d'Estrées [1] and I have undertaken to ruin Bourbon. Madame de La Fayette is at Chantilly. I gave your letter to Corbinelli, who read it to me; it is an admirable one; indeed, child, you have too much wit when you please to exercise it. Corbinelli is beside himself to find a woman's head formed like yours.

But I return to the foolish piece of news that Madame de Fiennes told me at Montargis. There was not the least mention made of Mesdames de Cl***, de G***, nor of the Chevalier de B*** [2]: nothing could be more erroneous.

[1] Gabrielle de Longueval, Maréchale d'Estrées.

[2] Not only none of these persons were suspected of this crime, but we are now in possession of reasons which were even unknown to Voltaire, to believe, with him, that the death of Madame was natural. Madame, the second wife of Monsieur, and the Duc de Saint-Simon (whose Letters and Memoirs have been recently published), seem to

Penautier was confined in Ravaillac's dungeon for nine days, where he was almost killed: upon which they removed him; his affair is a very disagreeable one. He has powerful protectors; the Archbishop of Paris [1], and M. Colbert, support him openly; but if La Brinvilliers continues to harass him much longer, nothing can save him. Madame Hamilton is inconsolable, and ruined beyond redemption; she is really to be pitied. Madame de Rochefort [2] is altered so as not to be known again, by a double tertian fever: does not that please you? The King's return seems to be every day more distant. You have seen the verses of the Abbé Têtu, in which exaggeration appears exaggerated. The answer to them in prose by M. de Pomponne would please you extremely. The Abbé has likewise written a letter to M. de Vivonne much prettier than any of Bal-

us, in adopting the opinion of the poisoning, to furnish themselves the strongest proofs against it. Their accounts are nearly similar.

They first agree that the succory-water Madame drank was not poisoned, because others drank of it after her; but that the silver goblet was so, and even that its edge was rubbed or greased with some drug. Is it not almost incredible, that a poison thus administered, should have had such sudden and violent effects?

According to the different accounts, the Chevalier de Lorraine, though absent at that period, was the author of the crime, and had sent the poison from Italy. But how could Louis XIV., who was struck with horror at it, and who (they say) only breathed so long as he was assured his brother was ignorant of the circumstance, how could he, two years after, restore to his brother this favoured villain, and even make him a Field-Maréchal, as if to console him for his exile? How is it possible to conceive what Madame (de Bavière) herself says, that she was sincerely reconciled to a man whom she considered as a poisoner?

The same remark applies to the Marquis d'Effiat, who is supposed to have greased the goblet, and who did not appear at that time, nor subsequently, to have quitted the Court.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, a witness of this death, does not confirm in her narrative the report of the poison. Madame de La Fayette represents Madame as being as ill as she was unhappy, for several days previous to her death. The King does not appear to have given credit to this pretended poisoning.

The Letters of Madame, and the Memoirs de Saint-Simon, are full of this humour, which prevents the most sincere from being strictly correct in their statements.

[1] François de Harlay.

[2] Madeleine de Laval Bois Dauphin.

zac's or Voiture's [1]; the praises in it are not fulsome. Madame de Thianges [2] had fire-works yesterday before her house, and gave away three hogsheads of wine on account of this victory. Some scaffolding broke, by which two or three people were killed.

I have seen Bussy, he is more gay, happier, and merrier, than ever. He finds himself so much distinguished from the other exiles, and is so sensible of this distinction, that he would not change places with anyone. I fancy he is about to marry *La Remiremont* [3] to the brother of Madame de Calvisson. This is the year of establishment for his daughters. I found, on my arrival, that La Garde's intended marriage had made a great noise here.

You make me completely happy in speaking with such certainty of your journey to Paris; it will be the last and surest method of restoring me to perfect health: now, my dear, I will tell you my plan, which I leave to M. de Grignan's consideration and yours. I would not have you repass the Durance, nor go up to Lambesc again, that will be throwing you too far back into the winter; and, in order to save you that trouble, I should wish you to leave Grignan, when your husband goes to meet the States; to travel in a litter, and take water at Rouen, and you should, in that case, depend upon finding my carriage at Briare to bring you hither. It would be a most admirable time for us to be together. You should there wait for M. de Grignan, who would bring you your equipage, and whom you would have the pleasure of receiving. We should like-

[1] The Maréchal de Vivonne, on the 2nd of June, 1676, attacked and defeated the united fleets of Spain and Holland, which had retired into the road of Palermo in the island of Sicily.

For the honour of truth, it must be said, that Duquesne commanded under M. de Vivonne, who, though possessing great wit, was by no means a great Admiral.

In the *Œuvres de Boileau*, is found a letter containing two others, very pleasantly written in the style of Balzac and Voiture, on the occasion of M. de Vivonne's victory. It is this, probably, which is attributed to the Abbé Têtu.

[2] Sister of M. de Vivonne.

[3] Marie-Thérèse de Rabutin, his daughter, then Lady of Remiremont, who afterwards married the Marquis of Montataire.

wise have the pleasure of this little advance, which would afford me no small joy, would save you an infinite deal of fatigue, and me the anxiety of thinking you suffer it. Give me an answer, my dearest child, to this proposal, which, in my opinion, ought to appear as reasonable to you as it does to me: and now let us say a word or two about Villebrune.

I never was more surprised than when I heard of his being at Grignan. I am certain you interrogated him sufficiently about my illness, of which he could give you an account from beginning to end. He has sent me an admirable powder: has he told you its composition? however, I am not to begin to take it till September. He is very proud of the reception he met with from you; I fancy it was not the worse for his mentioning me. I cannot but admire how chance has sent that man to you, as it sent the Capuchin to figure with me at Vichy. I must own I think he has a good understanding, and knowledge of his profession: it is to perfect himself in it, that he is going to Montpellier. He has had very long conversations with de Vardes concerning *potable gold.* He is greatly esteemed by our Bretons, every one strives who shall get him; and I know nothing amiss of him, except a little failing, to render him unworthy of your protection: he was a great consolation to me at *The Rocks.*

I have heard nothing further of what we believe to have been the source of all my disorders, and so I trust I am quite clear of them. I do not absolutely protest against bleeding, should there be real occasion for it. The good man's powders too may come in for their turn, when I have made myself worthy of their operation; for at present the waters of the pump at Vichy have so thoroughly scoured me, that I believe I have nothing left in my body; and you may say as they do in the play, "my mother is a stranger to impurity." I shall just venture to feel the air at Livry; for believe me, my dear, I will make a prudent use of the reins they have thrown upon my neck.

One can only laugh at La Garde's adventure: I as-

sure you, he was asleep; for you know, *l'amour tranquille s'endort aisément*, (the happy lover slumbers undisturbed). Alas! now I mention sleeping, M. de Bassompierre (Bishop of Saintes) has sunk into an eternal sleep, after an illness of five and twenty days, during which he was bled thirteen times; yesterday morning his fever had left him, and he thought himself better; he talked a whole hour with the Abbé Têtu. This *betterness*, in serious cases, is always deceitful; on a sudden he was seized with the agonies of death, and we have lost him after all. He was a most amiable and deserving man, and his loss is deeply regretted.

It is positively asserted, that Philisbourg is besieged: the *Holland Gazette* says, that they have lost by sea, what we have lost by land, for de Ruyter was their Turenne. If they could comfort themselves for this loss, as we did for ours, I should not pity them so much; but I am certain it will never enter into their heads to make eight new Admirals [1] to preserve Messina. For my part, I rejoice in their affliction, for this will render the Mediterranean as safe as a fish-pond, and you know the consequence of this.

I have just received a letter from my son, who is in the detachment with several other troops for Germany. This gives me no trifling concern; and though he endeavours to comfort me, with the assurance that he will make it in his way to call here and take leave of me, I can by no means relish this double campaign.

Adieu, my dearest child: the *worthy* embraces you and assures you that it will give him the greatest joy to see you.

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[1] A jest founded on the promotion of eight Maréchals of France, who were created a few days after the death of Turenne.

LETTER 432

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, July 3, 1676.

You tell me that it depends on me to regulate your journey; I have regulated it, and in such a manner, that I fancy neither you nor M. de Grignan can raise any objection to it, as your separation will be short, and there will be a great deal of trouble and fatigue saved to yourself, and I shall have a little additional pleasure, which, methinks, will be wholly my own. I have communicated my scheme to d'Hacqueville, who approves it highly. Think of it, my dear, and make your love for me your chief counsellor.

They say the Italian Princess (Madame de Monaco) is no longer in such favour with her mistress (MADAME). You know how severe the latter is on the subject of gallantry; she has taken it into her head, (how unreasonable some people are!) that her favourite has not the same aversion to a tenderness of heart, that she herself has; and this has occasioned strange disturbances. I will procure better information on this subject: what I know of it as yet is all in the clouds.

It seems to me as if I touched too slightly, in my last, on Villebrune: he is greatly esteemed in our Province; he preaches well [1], and has learning; the Prince de Tarente was very fond of him, and owed to him, in a great measure, his conversion, and that of his son. The Prince had given him a benefice at Laval worth about four thousand livres a year; some one, who had pretensions to it, talked of its being fallen into lapse, on an account which you are acquainted with: upon this the Abbé du Plessis was beforehand with him at Rome, and procured the benefice; it was

[1] This Villebrune was originally a Capuchin. See Letter 368, of 15th December, 1675, in this volume.

against the consent of all his family, that he took this step. However, he reaped no advantage from it, for M. de La Trémouille pretended that the benefice was in his gift, and that his consent was first to be obtained, so that the whole affair came to nothing, only Villebrune remained unprovided for: the Abbé du Plessis did not act well, and M. de La Trémouille has not dared to restore the benefice to Villebrune, who has ever since lived in Lower Brittany in great credit and reputation. If chance had thrown him among your chapter-house at Grignan[1], I should have thought you very happy in having such a person to consult on all occasions, and an excellent physician into the bargain. It is to discover certain secrets, which he supposes reserved only for the sun of Languedoc, that he has taken this journey to Montpellier. Truth obliges me to tell you this. I intend writing to de Vardes to recommend him to his protection. See how insensibly I have run into a long narrative.

La Brinvilliers's affair still goes on in the same way. She administered her poisons in pigeon-pies, by which a great many were killed: not that she had any particular reasons for these murders; it was out of mere curiosity, to try the effects of her drugs[2]. The Chevalier du Guet, who partook of these pretty entertainments about three years ago, has been languishing ever since. She inquired the other day, if he was dead: upon being answered in the negative, she said, turning aside her head, "He must have a very strong constitution then." M. de La Rochefoucauld swears this is true.

A delightful party has just left me; for you must know I kept my house for a week after my return from Vichy, as if I had been ill. The party I am speaking of consisted of the Maréchale d'Estrées, the *chanoine*[3], Bus-

[1] There was a chapter-house at Grignan, which had been founded by M. de Grignan's ancestors.

[2] Voltaire denies these pretended experiments, and they are not included in her sentence.

[3] N*** de Longueval, chanoine of Remiremont, sister of Maréchale d'Estrées.

sy, Rouville, and Corbinelli. Everything was going on gaily: you never saw a party more lively; when, just as we were at the height of our mirth, who should make his appearance, but the first Equerry [1] in deep mourning! we were all struck dumb at the sight; for my part I was ready to sink into the earth with shame, for not having taken any notice of his wife's [2] death. I had intended to pay him a visit with the Marquise d'Uxelles; however, instead of waiting for that ceremony, he came in person to inquire after my health and journey.

The Maréchale de Castelnau and her daughter are very attentive to me. I have heard nothing of the siege of Philisbourg since what I last wrote to you. Your brother is not yet gone; he does not go to Germany after all, but is to join Maréchal de Créqui's army. This appears to me a second campaign: that is by no means pleasant. Madame de Noailles told me yesterday, that, without the possibility of being deceived in her reckoning, she was brought to-bed at the end of eight months of a son, who is now a healthy boy of sixteen.

LETTER 433

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Monday, July 6, 1676.

Last night I saw the Cardinal de Bouillon, Caumartin, and Barillon; they talked much of you: they are beginning, they say, to reassemble again as mess-mates; but alas! the dearest of them [3] is missing.

M. de Louvois has gone to watch the enemy's motions, who has a design, it is said, upon Maëstricht, but the Prince will not believe it. He has had several long conferences

[1] Henri de Beringhen, first Equerry to the King.

[2] Anne du Blé, aunt of the late Maréchal d'Uxelles; she died 8th June, 1676.

[3] Cardinal de Retz.

with the King; and it is rumoured that he will be employed; but he has not presumed to offer his services, and it seems they will not mention the subject first; they wait therefore for expresses from M. de Louvois, before anything be determined. It is certain that a number of victims have been sacrificed to the ghosts of the two heroes of land and sea. I am afraid things in Flanders will not remain so quiet as you imagine. The poor Baron[1] is at Charleville with his company, waiting for orders: the Duc de Villeroi is to be General of this little army: they are enjoying the sweets and repose of Capua, which is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. As to Germany, M. de Luxembourg will have little more to do, than barely to stand by as a spectator, with an army of thirty thousand men, while Philisbourg is taken. God grant Maëstricht may not share the same fate. The best we can do in that case, according to the Prince's opinion, is to take some other place from them, which will be tit for tat. A fool once said on a similar occasion, "Agree to make an exchange of the towns you wish to have; it will save your men." I think there was a great deal of wisdom in this suggestion.

Madame de Rochefort's affliction rather increases than diminishes, and poor Madame Hamilton is universally pitied on account of her melancholy situation. She is left with six children, and destitute of provision for them. My niece de Bussy, I mean de Coligny, is a widow. Her husband died in Maréchal Schomberg's army of a dreadful fever. The Maréchal's lady has desired me to take her in the afternoon to see this fair mourner, who, in fact, is far from being so: for she declares she knew little of her husband, and has long wished to be a widow. He has left her all his property, so that she will find herself in the possession of fifteen or sixteen thousand livres a year. She would, by her own choice, live regularly, and dine every day at twelve like other people: but her father's attachment to her, and hers to him, will always oblige her to

[1] Monsieur de Sévigné.

breakfast at four in the afternoon, which is very disagreeable to her. She is on the point of lying-in. I think it will be proper for you to write a few lines to the *Rabutinage*; I will place it to my own account.

You are quite right to trust to Corbinelli's love for me, and to rely upon him for the care of my health; he acquits himself perfectly well in both these respects, and to crown all, absolutely adores you. I assure you he handles some little subjects very prettily in verse, as he pretends the ancients did before him; and is of opinion, that rhyme commands the attention more, and is much the same thing as the measured prose which Horace has brought into such credit. These are lofty words. He has written an epistle against flatterers, which would delight you. In short, he is very amusing, for he has always something or other new in his head. Villebrune told me that his powders raised the dead. This, it must be owned, is something like the boy playing at chuck-soû[1]. People may think what they please of him, but I know no man like him, for making the most of trifles.

LETTER 434

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, July 8, 1676.

You are undoubtedly right, my dear, in saying that the sentiment of affection which would make you set out instantly to see me, if I required it of you, or if there was a real necessity for it, shows me your heart more plainly, than the most elegant words could do; but as you refer me for advice to d'Hacqueville, and have done, with respect to me, like the Queen-Regents, who can take no step without a Council, you have given me a master in giving

[1] An allusion to the miraculous cures in the *Médecin malgré lui.*

Tiré du Cabinet de Mr. C.F.A. de Mussey. *Gravé par Lorieux*

AN UNFINISHED PART OF THE CASTLE AT GRIGNAN, PROVENCE.
(*The side by the Gallery*)

me a companion: you know the proverb. Well, my child, I must tell you what the great d'Hacqueville desired me to acquaint you with yesterday, which is, that he is not ignorant what a pleasure it would be to me to meet you, and not condemn myself to eat the *small fish* [1] all my life; but considering the fatigue of travelling in a coach, in these broiling days, as a dreadful thing, and which might occasion you a spell of sickness, it is natural to ask, what occasion there is for running all these risks on account of a health that is already much better than it has been? I walk about, and, except my hands, which are still a little stiff, I can wait with pleasure till the month of September, which will be about the time M. de Grignan will be preparing to meet the States; when affection and convenience will concur to induce you to pay me a visit. If you had come to Vichy, and from Vichy here, it would have been all very natural, and comprehensible; but your plans not according with this, and everyone knowing you will not come till September, the reason to which you refer me, advises you to let the water return into the river, and to follow the rules we have already laid down to you. We only desire you not to dissapoint us then. My health, though better than you imagine, will not be sufficiently restored without this last remedy. By this means, you will please all parties; you are the soul of Grignan, and you will not leave your house and *pigeons,* till you would have left them for Lambesc, and you will at that time come here, and restore me to life. I trust, my dear child, you will approve our d'Hacqueville's wisdom, and will enter into the sentiments of my heart, and the extreme joy I should have in seeing you once more. I am likewise persuaded that M. de Grignan will approve our resolutions, and will even be obliged to me for having deprived myself of the pleasure of seeing you at Vichy, rather than rob him of the satisfaction of having you with him at Grignan this summer; after that, it will be his turn to hunt, and hunt he shall, and we will receive him with pleasure.

[1] See Letter 426, of June 15th, 1676, in this volume.

I am afraid your letter of June twentieth is either stolen or strayed. You know, my dearest child, that nothing that comes from you can be indifferent to me, and that, doomed as I am to mourn your absence, your letters are the greatest comfort I have. You always seem to be uneasy respecting my health, and your love creates an anxiety I no longer deserve. It is true, I cannot yet close my hands; but I can move them, and make use of them for most purposes. I cannot cut or pare fruit, nor break eggs; but I eat, I write, I can put on my cap, and dress myself, so that I seem to ail nothing, and I can with great ease bear this little inconvenience. If the summer does not cure me, I am to put my hands into an ox's paunch: but as this will be only in the autumn, I assure you I will wait for you, before I apply this disagreeable remedy; perhaps, too, I may not stand in need of it. I walk very well, and indeed better than ever. I am not so fat as I was, and my back has a *flatness* which charms me. I should be quite grieved to grow fat again, and that you should not see me as I am at present. I have some slight pains in my knees still, but, indeed, they are so trifling, that they are scarcely worth mentioning.

Well, my dear, what think you? do I not talk sufficiently of myself now? This is enough at once, or I am much mistaken. You will have no occasion to question Corbinelli any more. He is often with me as well as La Mousse, and they both frequently entertain themselves with your father Descartes. They have undertaken to make me comprehend what they talk of, and I shall be charmed at that, that I may no longer appear a stupid fool, when you are here to join them. I tell them that I will learn this science, as I learned ombre, not to play myself, but to see others play. Corbinelli is delighted with the two faculties of the will which we find in ourselves, without being obliged to go so far in search of them. In fact, my child, we all long to see you; and expect, with fond impatience, the happy hour that brings you to us. I fancy you are alone, and the idea is very painful to me; not that I imagine soli-

tude is so disagreeable to you as it is to many others, but I regret the time we might spend so sweetly together. I have some thoughts myself of going to Livry, Madame de Coulanges says she will join me there, but she is too much taken up at Court to be able to absent herself.

The King comes to-day to St.-Germain, and by chance Madame de Montespan happens to be there at the same time. I think I would have found another method of managing this *rencontre,* as the affair is merely a matter of friendship. Madame de La Fayette arrived here the day before yesterday from Chantilly in a litter; this is an unpleasant mode of travelling, but her poor side cannot bear a coach. M. de La Rochefoucauld has revived the subject of the journey to Liancourt and Chantilly, of which we have been talking these ten years; if they will carry me off by force, they must, I suppose.

Madame is delighted at the return of Monsieur. She every day takes an opportunity of embracing Madame de Monaco, to let the world see, that they are upon better terms together than ever; but, nevertheless, I foresee strange disorders in that little Court. I have sent M. d'Ormesson to desire the first President to grant me an audience, but it seems he cannot do it till La Brinvilliers' trial is over: who would have thought that our affair would have clashed with hers? Poor Penautier's depends entirely on hers: but wherefore poison poor Matarel, who had twelve children? To me his disorder appears to have been very violent, but in no wise sudden, nor resembling the effects of poison; however, this engrosses the whole conversation here at present. A hogshead of poisoned wine has been found, of which six or seven persons have already died.

I often see Madame de Vins. She appears to have a great regard and friendship for you. I am of opinion, that M. de La Garde and you ought on no account to separate; what folly it would be for each of you to keep in your own house, as in the time of the civil wars! I am very glad that I possess his esteem. The Marquise d'Uxelles is wild

about his marriage: she can never hold her tongue. When you have nothing else to tell me, let me know all your nonsense of Aix.

M. Marin expects his son [1] this winter. I can perfectly understand the pleasure you take in the beauty and improvements of Grignan; this became absolutely necessary, when you resolved to make it so much your residence. We shall not see the poor Baron at last, the King forbids it. We approve de Ruyter's last words, and admire the tranquillity of your sea.

Adieu, my lovely child: I enjoy luxuriously the hope of seeing and embracing you.

LETTER 435

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, July 10, 1676.

Madame de Villars, who enters warmly into my joy at the prospect of seeing you, told me yesterday, that she considered the letter, in which you make me absolute mistress of regulating the time of your journey, as a bill of exchange, payable at sight, and which it is in my power to receive whenever I think proper. I found the Duc de Sault with her, ready to die with laughing at the report which has spread, and still spreads, that the King is returned on account of the besieging of Maëstricht, or some other place; this would be a fine step for the poor devils of courtiers, who are just come home without a soû in their pockets: however, on Sunday next His Majesty is to declare his intentions. *Quanto's* good *friend* had determined not to come in till the other party was here ready to receive him; and if anything had happened to prevent this meeting, he was to have slept at a place thirty leagues off; but, in short, everything fell out to his heart's desire. The

[1] First President of the Parliament of Aix.

friend's household came before him, due time was allotted for the necessary ceremonies, but much more to pure and simple *friendship,* to which the whole night was dedicated [1]. Yesterday they walked out together, accompanied by some ladies, and were very glad to pay a visit to Versailles before the Court came thither, which will be in a few days, provided no earthquakes happen.

Penautier has been confronted with La Brinvilliers. It was a very melancholy interview; they were accustomed to meet upon more agreeable terms. She has so repeatedly declared, that if she dies, she will make many others die with her, that there is little doubt that she will draw this poor wretch in to share her fate; or, at least, to be put to the question, which is a very dreadful thing. This man has numerous friends, and those of great consequence, whom he formerly obliged, while he was in possession of his two places [2]. They leave no stone unturned to serve him, and money flies in all directions upon the occasion; but if he is convicted, nothing can possibly save him.

I shall now lay down my pen, and take a stroll into the city, to see if I can pick up anything to amuse you. My hands are much as usual; if I found them more uncomfortable, I would immediately apply the remedies that have been proposed to me; but I find myself so well stocked with patience to bear them, that I shall wait till I see you, when your company will cure me of the disgust I have for medicine.

I have just returned from the city. I have been at Madame de Louvois', Madame de Villars', and the Maréchale d'Estrées'. I have seen the Grand-Master [3], who talks of setting out on Monday next, whether the King does or not; for if Maëstricht should be besieged (as everyone believes it will), he says he would not, upon any ac-

[1] This alludes to Louis XIV. and his mistress Madame de Montespan.

[2] Of Treasurer-General of the States of Languedoc, and Receiver-General of the Clergy of France.

[3] The Duc du Lude.

count, miss the opportunity of distinguishing himself on the occasion. He is a mere boy on this subject; and, instead of declining the service, as His Majesty supposed he would have done, upon having others put over his head, he seems resolved to deserve preferment by his service, as if he was no more than a mere cadet.

But this is not what I meant to say to you, the subject has carried me farther than I intended; I have to tell you, that the King intends to set off again; he has been shut up a long time with M. de Louvois. The Prince waits with impatience for the result of this conference. The courtiers are all at their wit's end, not knowing where to find either money or credit; most of them have sold their horses; everything is in motion; the citizens are for having the Prince sent, to save His Majesty the fatigue of another journey. The detachment that was sent to Maréchal de Créqui's army returns back to Flanders. In short, I cannot say, nor can any one else, where this bustle will end.

The *friend* of *Quanto* arrived about an hour before *Quanto,* and, while he was talking to those about him, word was brought him of her arrival: he ran to meet her with great precipitation, and remained with her for a considerable time. Yesterday he walked, as I have already told you, but in *trio* with *Quanto* and her female *friend*; no other person was admitted, and the *sister* [1] was quite afflicted at it: this is all I know. The *male friend's* wife has wept bitterly. It is whispered, that if her husband goes, she is to accompany him on his journey; but all this will be cleared up in a short time.

Adieu, my dearest and best beloved; I embrace you affectionately. La St. Géran has a fever, at which she is as much surprised, as I was, at *The Rocks.* She has never been ill, any more than I had been at that time.

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[1] The Marquise de Thianges.

LETTER 436

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, July 17, 1676.

At length, it is all over: La Brinvilliers is in the air; after her execution, her poor little body was thrown into a large fire, and her ashes dispersed by the wind, so that whenever we breathe, we shall inhale some particles of her, and by the communication of the minute spirits, we may be all infected with the desire of poisoning, to our no small surprise. She was condemned yesterday; and this morning her sentence was read to her, which was to perform the *amende honorable* in the church of Notre-Dame; and, after that, to have her head cut off, her body burnt, and her ashes thrown into the air. They were for giving her the question, but she told them there was no occasion for that, and that she would confess everything; accordingly, she was till five o'clock in the evening, relating the history of her life, which has been more shocking than was even imagined. She gave poison to her father ten times successively, but without effect, and also to her brother, and several others, at the same time preserving the appearance of the greatest love and confidence. She has said nothing against Penautier. Notwithstanding this confession, they gave her the question, ordinary and extraordinary, the next morning; but this extorted nothing more from her. She desired to speak with the Procurator-General: no one yet knows the subject of their conversation. At six o'clock she was carried in a cart, with no other covering than her shift, and with a cord round her neck, to the church of Notre-Dame, to perform the *amende honorable*; after which, she was put again into the same cart, where I saw her extended on a truss of straw, with a confessor on one side, and the hangman on the other: indeed, my child, the sight made me shudder. Those who saw the execution,

say, she mounted the scaffold with great courage. I was on the bridge of Notre-Dame with the good d'Escars: never was Paris in such commotion, nor its attention so fixed upon one event. Yet, ask many people what they saw, and they will tell you, they saw no more than I did, who was not present; in short, the whole day has been dedicated to this tragedy. I shall know more particulars to-morrow, and you shall have them at second-hand.

It is said, that the siege of Maëstricht has begun; that of Philisbourg still continues; this is a melancholy prospect for the spectators. Our little friend [1] made me laugh very heartily this morning. She says, that Madame de Rochefort, in all her grief, has preserved an extreme regard for Madame de Montespan; and she mentioned to me, the way in which, amidst her sighs and sobs, she declared how great an affection she had all her life felt for that lady. Are you malicious enough to be as much diverted with this as I have been?

I have another little story for you, but M. de Grignan must not read it. The *little worthy* (M. de Fiesque), who has not wit enough for invention, has said very innocently, that, being one day at the *mouse-trap's* [2], she said to him, after a conversation of two or three hours, *"Little worthy,* I have something upon my mind against you."—"What is it, Madame?"—"You do not worship the Virgin; ah! you do not worship the Virgin: this gives me great uneasiness." I wish you may be wiser than I am, and that this ridiculous story may not strike you as it has struck me.

They say L**** [3] has found his dear rib writing a letter which did not please him: the affair has made a great noise. D'Hacqueville is very busy accommodating matters

[1] Madame de Coulanges.

[2] The *mouse-trap* is Madame de Lionne, as appears by a witticism of Madame Cornuel's, mentioned in the Letter 405, of the 17th April, 1676, in this volume. The *Amours des Gaules* inform us, that M. de Fiesque was her lover in title of office, whom the great number of his rivals could not prevail upon to resign it.

[3] M. de Louvigny, second son of Maréchal de Gramont. D'Hacqueville was the intimate friend of his family.

between them: you may imagine it was not from him I had the story; but it is, nevertheless, true.

LETTER 437

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, July 22, 1676.

Yes, my dear, this is exactly what I wish; I am perfectly contented, and even overpaid for the time I have lost, by the happy clash of M. de Grignan's sentiments with mine. He will be very glad to have you with him this summer at Grignan. I have considered his interest, at the expense of what is dearest to me in the whole world; and he, in his turn, is solicitous to favour me, by not suffering you to return to Provence, and by making your journey hither a month or six weeks sooner; which gives me true pleasure, and prevents your encountering the cold of winter and bad roads. Nothing can be better than this arrangement; it gives me all the joys of hope, which are so much coveted and esteemed. This, then, is fixed: I shall often speak of it, and often thank you for your compliance. My carriage shall meet you at Briare, if we have any water in the river. The people pass over the Seine every day on foot, and insult the two stately bridges that lead into the Isle.

I have just written to the Chevalier, who was uneasy about my health; I have informed him that I am very well, but cannot close my hand, nor dance the *bourée*: these two delightful faculties I must be contented to dispense with for a time; but when you come, you will make a complete cure. I have told you that I dined the other day at Sucy at the President Amelot's, in company with d'Hacqueville, Corbinelli, Coulanges, and the good Abbé. I was pleased to revisit a house, where I passed my youth, when I was troubled with no rheumatism. However,

though my hand still refuses to close, I have so well recovered the use of it, that I am satisfied with the portion of health I enjoy; all my fear is, that I shall grow fat again too soon, and lose the advantage of being seen by you while my back continues flat. Entertain no longer, my dear, any concern for my health, and think only of coming to see me. Our friend Corbinelli is with me, but he will give you an account of himself. Villebrune says that he has cured me; let him have the credit of it; he is not in a situation to neglect anything, that may procure him such patients as the Vardes and Moulceaux; he does well to engage them by any means. Vardes tells Corbinelli that, from this idea, he reveres him as the god of medicine. They may very well amuse themselves with him, on this account, and on many others: he is like a frighted bird; at a loss where to find a bough on which to repose in safety.

Let me tell you a little more of La Brinvilliers. She died as she lived, that is to say, very resolutely. She entered the place where she expected to have been put to the torture, and seeing three large vessels of water, "This," said she, "must certainly be to drown me; for, considering the smallness of my size, they can never pretend to make me drink so much." She heard her sentence read without the least token of fear or weakness; and towards the latter part of it, she desired them to begin it again, telling them, that the circumstance of the cart had struck her so much as to divert her attention from the rest. On her way to execution, she desired her confessor to place the executioner before her, that she might not see that rascal Desgrais, who had taken her. Desgrais preceded the cart on horseback. Her confessor reproved her for the sentiment, upon which she asked pardon, and submitted to endure the disagreeable sight. She mounted the ladder and the scaffold alone, bare-footed; and the executioner was a quarter of an hour dressing, shaving, and preparing her for the execution: this caused a great murmur among the crowd, and was certainly cruel. The next day her bones were gathered up,

as relics, by the people, who said she was a saint. She had two confessors, one of whom told her that she ought to reveal everything; the other, that she ought not: she laughed at this diversity of opinions between the learned Fathers, and said, she believed she might very conscientiously do which of the two she pleased, and it pleased her to reveal nothing. By this means Penautier is come off whiter than snow: the public, however, is not satisfied, and seems still to entertain some little suspicion. But see the misfortune of it: this creature refused to reveal what they wanted to know, and revealed what nobody asked her to do. For instance, she said M. Fouquet had sent Glaser, the apothecary they employed in preparing their poisons, into Italy, to procure an herb, which is, it seems, a choice ingredient in their mysterious concoctions; and that she had heard of this at Sainte-Croix. You see what pains are taken to load this poor unfortunate man with crimes, and to complete his destruction; but the truth of this information is much suspected. A thousand other things are said, but this must suffice for to-day.

It is said M. de Luxembourg intends to undertake some great exploit to succour Philisbourg; it is a very hazardous attempt. The siege of Maëstricht is continued, but Maréchal d'Humières is going to take Aire[1], as I said the other day, as if engaged with the enemy in a game at chess. He has taken all the troops that were intended for Maréchal de Créqui; and the general officers who were named for this army have been returned to Germany, such as La Trousse, the Chevalier du Plessis, and many others. Our youths remain with M. de Schomberg. I had rather they were there, than with Maréchal d'Humières. M. de Schomberg favoured our siege, and the fortifications of Condé, as Villa Hermosa[2] favoured the siege of Maëstricht, and the Prince of Orange. All this savours of a warm campaign; but, in the meantime, nothing but amusement is seen at Versailles; every day there are new pleasures,

[1] This place was taken on the 31st of July.

[2] The General of the Spanish troops.

comedies, concerts, and suppers on the water. They play every day in the King's apartment; the Queen, the ladies, and the courtiers; their favourite game, at present, is *reversi*. The King and Madame de Montespan keep a bank at one table; the Queen and Madame de Soubise, who plays while the Queen retires to prayers, are at another. At the other tables are the Prince and M. de Créqui, Dangeau, and Langlée. They game so high as to win or lose every day, two or three thousand louis-d'ors.

Madame de Nevers [1] is beautiful as the day, and she charms all the world, without exciting envy. Mademoiselle de Thianges, her sister, is tall, and has all the requisites to form a fine woman. The Grancey Mansion continues to be frequented as it used to be; no change is to be seen there. The Chevalier de Lorraine is very languid; his sickly appearance might excite suspicion of his having been poisoned, if Madame de Brinvilliers had been his heir. The Duc takes up his summer quarters there; but Madame de Rohan goes to Lorges: this is a little embarrassing. Do you not wish to hear some news from Denmark? I send you a letter I have just received from the Princesse de Tarente. It will give you pleasure to learn this instance of lenity in the King: it is diminishing punishments instead of increasing them [2]. I have received your letter of the fifteenth, informing me of your intentions as to your journey; you speak of it with so much affection, that my heart is pierced to the very centre. I am surprised to find in myself such a sense of justice, and consideration for the Grignans, as to leave you with them till October: I cannot, however, think, without regret, on the loss of so much time, which passes away in your absence, when I might have had you with me. I discover, on this occasion, repentances, and follies, which draw upon me

[1] Gabrielle de Damas, daughter of Claude-Léonor, Marquis de Thianges, and of Gabrielle de Rochechouart-Mortemart.

[2] She alludes to Griffenfeld: the King had changed his sentence, from death, to imprisonment. But what Madame de Sévigné adds, is a painful recollection of the unjust severity with which Louis had aggravated the sentence of Fouquet, by the change he made in it.

the raillery of d'Hacqueville; he knows that you are, in the meantime, paying the attendance you justly owe to the Archbishop of Arles. Do you not find great satisfaction in being capable of doing whatever reason prescribes to you? I perceive that you know at present, better than I do, how to pay a just submission to its dictates. I yesterday made the same reflection you have made on Penautier, that his table will be little frequented. I know not how La M*** will behave towards her husband, but she has never been accused of having changed her gallant; d'Hacqueville could, if he pleased, tell us pleasant stories of her. I cannot sufficiently praise the waters of Vichy; they have given me new strength. I am well, for the remain of my disorder is not worth mentioning; when you are here, I will be under your direction; till then, I must think of Livry: I am almost suffocated here, and want air and exercise. You will recognize me by this. The reason you assign for being delighted that M. de Marseilles is created a Cardinal, is precisely the same as mine: he will no longer have the joy, or the hope, of being raised to that dignity.

They tell us wonders from Germany: stupid people! they suffer themselves to be drowned by a little rivulet, and have not the wit to turn its course! It is believed that M. de Luxembourg will beat them, and that they will not take Philisbourg. It is not our fault, if they render themselves unworthy of being our enemies. My son is in M. de Schomberg's army, which is now the safest. What do you say to me from the Grignans, who are at present with you? I embrace them all, and salute the Archbishop with great respect.

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*LETTER 438

From Madame DE GRIGNAN *to the Comte* DE BUSSY.

Grignan, July 22, 1676.

I entreat you, Sir, to make my compliments of condolence to your daughter, on the death of the Marquis de Coligny. You know what is proper to be said on this melancholy occasion much better than I do. Mine would be a very ill-timed and common-place compliment, which would not console her, if she is really afflicted, and would appear impertinent, if she is not so. I place my cause, therefore, in your hands, that you may season the assurances I give you of the interest I take in everything that concerns her. If she has lain-in, make this the second head of your discourse. But I suppose this forecast will not exempt me from anything with respect to you: you will require a letter in quality of grandfather. Let me know whether you are resolved to give me no quarter on this point, that I may begin to prepare myself; for I own I shall find it a very difficult undertaking to address so venerable a personage with becoming reverence. Still I have examples at hand which ought to familiarise me to this ill-placed dignity in those who support it. You are neither younger no more lively than my mother was, when I subjected her to the same affront. I have desired her to tell you how much I rejoice at your return to Paris. Though mystery is pleasant on a thousand occasions, I dare say you are very well pleased to dispense with it at present. I hope to take advantage of this indulgence myself in the course of the winter. In the meantime, I recommend my mother's spleen to your care, and request you to preserve me always some little share in your remembrance, and in that of the amiable widow.

LETTER 439

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, July 24, 1676.

I have this morning seen the handsome Abbé. We anticipate, in imagination, the pleasure of seeing you, my dear child: this delightful hope diffuses a joy and tranquillity over my life, and has entirely removed the mists of dullness that your absence had occasioned. I cannot but be well, when I reflect that you are preparing to pay me a visit. D'Hacqueville wishes me to return to Vichy again in the autumn, but I am so tired of travelling, that I cannot think of it. Besides, neither my hands nor knees require so quick a repetition; and I know a recipe that will effect a cure. It is true, I should meet you; but there is no necessity for my being at that trouble to induce you to come; this journey may be better placed another time. I shall therefore rest quietly till you come, and go and cool myself at Livry. The first President sent me word by M. de Ormesson, that as I now know what it is to be ill, I shall the better enter into his intention of going to Bâville, to physic and cool himself for a fortnight or three weeks. The Queen of Poland [1] is coming to Bourbon, and I fancy she will come to Paris while she is on her travels; you will then have a sight of her, and an opportunity of admiring what fortune can do.

Penautier is happy; never was a man so well supported; you will find that he will get out of all this, though not clearly justified in the opinion of everyone. There were some very extraordinary circumstances in the course of the trial, not so proper to be committed to writing. Cardinal de Bonzi used to say in jest, that none of those who had pensions on his benefices would live long, for that his *star* would kill them. About two or three months ago,

[1] Marie-Casimire de La Grange d'Arquien, the wife of Jean Sobieski, elected King of Poland in May 1674.

the Abbé Fouquet, happening to meet his Eminence in his carriage with Penautier by his side, said, openly, "I have just met Cardinal de Bonzi with his *star* [1]." Was not that droll? I did hear a thousand good things to amuse you with some time ago, but I have forgotten them all now; as soon as I recollect them, I will send them to you with all possible expedition.

Adieu, my dearest child; it is late, and I am not in a humour for gossiping. I have spent the evening with d'Hacqueville, in Madame de La Fayette's garden, where there is a fountain and a little covered arbour: it is the prettiest little place in the world to breathe in in Paris.

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*LETTER 440

From the Comte DE BUSSY *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, July 27, 1676.

You are right, Madame; you could have written nothing to my daughter which would have compensated for the loss of a husband; and you have much more wit, in my opinion, than you would have had in hers. I shall make your compliments to her, and shall say neither more nor less than I ought to say. This just line cannot be drawn at your immense distance. I shall also tell her of your joy at her safe delivery; but I shall not excuse you from writing to me upon the occasion. I will allow no one but you to jest with me; for, with respect to disposition, I am farther from peevish old age than yourself. Write to me once or twice more, and then come and assist me to remove the obstructions in your mother's spleen. Your absence prevents my remedies from being efficacious.

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[1] Cardinal de Bonzi was looked upon as one of those who protected Penautier the most openly.

LETTER 441

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, July 29, 1676.

We have here a change of scene, which will appear as agreeable to you, as it does to every one else. I was on Saturday at Versailles with the Villars. You know the ceremony of attending on the Queen at her toilette, at mass, and at dinner; but there is now no necessity of being stifled with the heat, and with the crowd, while their Majesties dine; for at three, the King and Queen, MONSIEUR, MADAME, MADEMOISELLE, the Princes and Princesses, Madame de Montespan, and her train, the courtiers, and the ladies, in short, the whole Court of France, retire to that fine apartment of the King's, which you know. It is furnished with the utmost magnificence; they know not there what it is to be incommoded with heat; and pass from one room to another without being crowded. A game at *reversi* gives a form to the assembly, and fixes everything. The King and Madame de Montespan keep a bank together. MONSIEUR, the Queen, and Madame de Soubise, Dangeau, and Langlée, with their companies, are at different tables. The baize is covered with a thousand louis-d'ors; they use no other counters. I saw Dangeau play, and could not help observing how awkward others appeared in comparison to him. He thinks of nothing but his game, though he scarcely seems to attend to it; he gains where others lose; takes every advantage; nothing escapes or distracts him; in short, his good conduct defies fortune. Thus, two hundred thousand francs in ten days, a hundred thousand crowns in a month, are added to his account-book under the head, *received*[1]. He had the complaisance to

[1] In the eulogium of Dangeau, Fontenelle notices his singular superiority in the art of games. He made the most learned calculations, without seeming to pay the least attention to them. Having asked a favour of the King, he promised to grant it, on condition that, during

say I was a partner with him in the bank, by which means I was seated very commodiously. I bowed to the King in the way you taught me; and he returned my salutation, as if I had been young and handsome. The Queen talked to me of my illness, nor did she leave you unmentioned. The Duc paid me a thousand of those unmeaning compliments, which he bestows so liberally. The Maréchal de Lorges attacked me in the name of the Chevalier de Grignan; and, in short, *tutti quanti* (all the rest). You know what it is to receive a word from everyone who passes you. Madame de Montespan talked to me of Bourbon, and desired me to tell her how I liked Vichy, and whether I had found any benefit there. She said that Bourbon, instead of removing the pain from her knee, had given her it in both. Her beauty and her shape are really surprising; she is much thinner than she was; and yet neither her eyes, her lips, nor her complexion, are injured. She was dressed in French point; her hair in a thousand curls, and the two from her temples very low upon her cheeks; she wore on her head black ribbons, intermixed with the pearls, which once belonged to the Maréchale de l'Hôpital, diamond pendants of great value, and three or four bodkins. In a word, she appeared a triumphant beauty, calculated to raise the admiration of all the foreign Ambassadors. She has heard that complaints were made of her having prevented all France from seeing the King; she has restored him, as you see, and you cannot imagine the delight this has occasioned, nor the splendour it has given to the Court. This agreeable confusion, without confusion, of all the most select persons in the kingdom, lasts from three o'clock till six. If any couriers arrive, the King retires to read his letters, and returns to the assembly. There is always mu-

the time in which he was engaged at play, he should put his request into verse, confining himself to exactly a hundred lines. After the game was over, in which he had appeared no more occupied than usual, he recited his hundred lines to the King, fairly counted. It was not play alone that made his fortune. He was a complete courtier, a species of perfection which leads to many vices and many follies. By this means he furnished La Bruyère with the traits of one of his most finished portraits, the character of Pamphile in the chapter *Des Grands*.

sic, to which he sometimes listens, and which has an admirable effect: in the meantime, he chats with the ladies, who are accustomed to have that honour. They leave off their game at the hour I mentioned, without the trouble of reckoning, because they use no marks or counters. The pools are of five, six, or seven hundred, and sometimes of a thousand or twelve hundred, louis-d'ors. In the beginning, each person pools twenty-five; that makes a hundred, and the dealer afterwards pools ten. The person who holds the Knave of Hearts is entitled to four louis; they pass, and when they play before the pool is taken, it is a forfeit of sixteen, to teach them not to play out of turn. They talk incessantly. "How many Hearts have you? I have two; I have three; I have one; I have four." Dangeau is pleased with this tittle tattle; he discovers the cards they have in their hands, he draws his consequences, and is directed in his play by their indiscretion: I observed with pleasure his great skill and dexterity.

At six they take the air in calèshes; the King and Madame de Montespan, the Prince and Madame de Thianges, and Mademoiselle d'Heudicourt, upon the little seat before, which seems to her a place in Paradise. You know how these calèshes are made; they do not sit face to face in them, but all look the same way. The Queen was in another with the Princesses: the whole Court followed in different equipages, according to their different fancies. They went afterwards in gondolas upon the canal, where there was music: at ten the comedy began, and at twelve they concluded the day with the Spanish entertainment of *media noche*; thus we passed the Saturday. But we came from thence in the afternoon. If I were to tell you how many talked to me of you, how many inquired after you, how many asked me questions without waiting for answers, how many I neglected to answer, how little they cared, and how much less I did, you would own that I had given you a very natural description of *l'iniqua corte* (the wicked Court): however, it never was so agreeable; everyone wishes it may continue. Madame de Nevers is

very pretty, very modest, very innocent: her beauty makes me think of you. M. de Nevers is the gayest creature in the world; his wife loves him passionately. Mademoiselle de Thianges is a more regular beauty than her sister, but not half so charming. M. du Maine is incomparable; his wit is astonishing, the things he says are beyond imagination. Madame de Maintenon, Madame de Thianges, *Guelphes* and *Gibelins* [1], are all assembled. MADAME paid me a thousand attentions on account of the good Princesse de Tarente. Madame de Monaco had gone to Paris. The Prince paid a visit the other day to Madame de La Fayette: that Prince,

All' cui spada ogni vittoria è certa [2].

How is it possible not to be flattered by such a distinction, especially since he is not inclined to obtrude his civilities on the ladies? He talks of the war, and expects news like the rest. We tremble a little at what we may hear from Germany. It is said, however, that the Rhine is so swelled by the melted snow from the mountains, that the enemy is more embarrassed than we are. Rambures has been killed by one of his soldiers, who was discharging his musket very innocently. The siege of Aire continues; we have lost some Lieutenants in the Guards, and some soldiers. Schomberg's army is perfectly safe. Madame de Schomberg has begun to love me again: the Baron profits by it, in the extreme caresses of his General. The *petit glorieux* (the Chevalier de Grignan) has no more to do than the rest. He may perhaps be uneasy at this, but if he be ambitious of a wound or contusion, he must give it himself: God grant he may continue in this idleness. These, my dear, are terrific accounts: you will either be very much tired with or very much amused by them, for they cannot be indifferent to you. I wish you may be in the humour you are in sometimes, when you say, "Why

[1] Two celebrated factions, one taking the part of the Popes, and the other of the Emperors.

[2] Whose sword is certain of victory. [Translation.]

will you not talk to me? well! I wonder at my mother, who would rather die than say a single word to me." Oh! if you are not contented now, I am sure it is not my fault, any more than it is yours if I am not contented with the death of de Ruyter.

There are passages in your letters that are excellent. You say truly on the subject of the marriage, that prudence directs it, but that it is a little late in the day. Continue me in the good graces of M. de La Garde, and always remember me to M. de Grignan. The similarity of our opinions on the subject of your departure has renewed our friendship.

You think that I have always a fancy to speak wonders of the Grand-Master: I do not absolutely deny it; but I thought you would have taken it for raillery, when I told you the desire he has to become a Maréchal of France, and to enjoy that dignity in its ancient lustre. But you seem inclined to oppose whatever I say on this subject; the world is extremely partial: its partiality has been very apparent in the case of La Brinvilliers. Never were such horrid crimes treated so mildly: she was not put to the question; they even gave her hopes of a pardon, and such hopes, that she did not expect to die; nay, even when she was mounting the scaffold, she asked whether it was in earnest; at length, her ashes are dispersed to the wind: and her confessor says she is a saint. The first President made choice of this doctor, as a person very proper to attend her; and it was the very same they had fixed upon. Have you never observed those who play tricks with cards? they shuffle them a long time, and bid you take whichever you please; they would have you think it is indifferent to them: you take a card, and think it to be your own choice, but find it to be precisely the same they designed you should take. This comparison is perfectly just. Maréchal de Villeroi said, the other day, that Penautier would be ruined by this affair; Maréchal de Gramont replied, that he might save the expense of keeping a table. The conversation of these two great men might furnish a pretty

subject for an epigram. I suppose you know, it is believed, that a hundred thousand crowns have been dispersed in proper hands to facilitate matters: innocence seldom makes such profusions. Nothing can be more just than what you have said of this horrible woman. I believe you may be easy, for it is not possible she can be in Paradise; a soul so deeply stained with guilt must surely be separated from others. We are entirely of your opinion, that it is far better to assassinate. This is a mere trifle, in comparison of being eight months in killing a father; and receiving in the meantime his complaints and caresses; to which this pious daughter answered, only by redoubling the dose.

Tell the Archbishop of Arles what the first President has advised me to do for my health. I have shown my hands, and almost my knees, to Langeron, that he may tell you exactly how I am. I use a sort of liniment, which I am told will complete my cure. I shall not have the cruelty to plunge myself into bullock's blood till the dog-days are over. But it is you, my dear child, that must complete my cure. If M. de Grignan could but conceive the pleasure he does me in approving your journey, it would recompense him for the six weeks he is to be without you.

Madame de La Fayette is on very good terms with Madame de Schomberg. The latter is wonderfully obliging to me, and so is her husband to my son. Madame de Villars thinks seriously of going to Savoie; she will meet you upon the road. Corbinelli always adores you: he takes infinite care of me. The *worthy* begs you will believe that he will have the truest joy on seeing you; he is fully persuaded that I stand in great need of this remedy, and you know the friendship he has for me. Livry is continually recurring to my thoughts, and I frequently complain of being stifled here, in order to make them all the more ready to acquiesce with my journey.

Adieu, my best-beloved. You entreat me to love you; I willingly consent to it.

LETTER 442

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, July 31, 1676.

It is said there will be an illumination to-morrow at Versailles. Madame de La Fayette, and Madame de Coulanges, have just gone. I wish you had been here: after having seen the good Villarses, and searched in vain for Mademoiselle de Méri, I have returned here to write to you, which is all the pleasure I can have, till the greater one of seeing you arrives. Even the good Abbé is at Livry, so that I spend this evening very agreeably with you, my dear child. All those who have any interest in what passes in Germany and Flanders, are somewhat troubled. We expect every day to hear of M. de Luxembourg's having beaten the enemy, and you know what happens sometimes in these cases. They have made a sally upon Maëstricht, in which the enemy had above four hundred men slain. The siege of Aire goes on as usual. The Duc de Villeroi, and a large detachment of cavalry, have been sent to reinforce Maréchal d'Humières; I fancy your brother will be of the party, but notwithstanding he is pretty mindful in writing to me, yet, I know not how it happens, I have never letters like other people, which makes me uneasy. I have even put off, for some time, going to Livry, to see how these affairs will be cleared up. M. de Louvois has, by his own authority, ordered M. de Schomberg nearer to Aire; and has written His Majesty word, that he was afraid the delay of a courier might injure his affairs. Make your own notes upon this text.

While I am chatting with you, I may as well say something of the Grand Duchess, and Madame de Guise [1].

[1] These two Princesses were daughters of Gaston de France, Duc d'Orléans, and of Marguerite de Lorraine.

They are upon such very bad terms together, that they do not speak, though they meet every day in the same places. The Grand Duchess is in favour with the King; she has an apartment at Versailles, where she makes sometimes a pretty long stay. She has gone to the illumination; and in a short time, her prison will be a Court, and a strict attachment to her own agreeable family. The Grand Duc has been informed that the retirement he had been promised, had been ill observed; this he said was of little consequence, for in placing his wife in the hands of the King, he had removed from his own mind all anxiety respecting her conduct. The Comte de Saint Maurice told me yesterday, that the Grand Duc, seeing a nobleman of Savoie at his Court, said to him with a sigh: "Ah, Sir! how happy you are in the possession of a Princess of France, who thinks it no martyrdom to reign in your Court!"

There is a rumour afloat of Théobon, as if, although duels were forbidden, yet a *rencontre* was permitted; but this I mention merely as hear-say, for I know nothing about it for a certainty. Your cousin d'Harcourt has taken the veil at Montmartre; the whole Court was present at the ceremony. Her fine locks hung carelessly down her shoulders; and on her head she had a wreath of flowers, and looked so sweet and innocent a victim, that, it is said, no one present could refrain from tears.

You are too good, to speak as you do of the Rabutins; I should heartily detest them, were they to honour and esteem you less than they do. M. d'Alby [1] is dead, and has left immense treasures to the Duc du Lude. Alas! how saint-like has our good M. de Saintes [2] disposed of his estate, in comparison with that wretched miser! Here are noble benefices vacant: the Bishopric of Alby is worth twenty-five thousand crowns per annum; it has been raised into an Archbishopric: but you knew before we did that there is still a much more noble one to be disposed of, I

[1] Gaspard de Daillon, uncle of the Duc du Lude, and Archbishop of Alby.

[2] See the Letter 431, of the first of this month, in this volume.

mean the sovereign pontificate. M. de Rome[1], as M. de Noyon says, is at length dead. I wait for d'Hacqueville to know what our good Cardinal (de Retz) will do; if he should set out for Rome, you must leave nothing undone to have the pleasure of seeing him as he comes your way.

M. de Marseilles is still considerably behindhand; the new Pope will promote his own creatures first, and afterwards those of the several crowns, but it is not quite certain, whether that of Poland[2] will be included among the latter; that is, according to the Pope. If they are inclined to quibble, they may say that the crown of Poland has only the solicitation, and not the right of nomination, as those of France and Spain; or if it could nominate, who can say that the lot would fall upon M. de Marseilles? In short, there is plenty of time. Did I tell you that Madame de Savoie[3] has sent a hundred ells, of the most beautiful velvet that ever was seen, to Madame de La Fayette, and as many ells of satin for lining; and that she has sent her, within these two days, her portrait set in diamonds, valued at three hundred louis-d'ors? I know nothing more delightful than the power of giving, and the will of doing it, like this Princess.

I have just had a conversation with d'Hacqueville. The King has very earnestly entreated our good Cardinal to go to Rome; he has lately received a courier; they are all to go by land, because the King has no galleys to furnish them with for their passage, so that you will not have an opportunity of seeing him. We are under great uneasiness about his health; but fully confide in his known prudence and abilities, for accommodating the language of the Holy Spirit with the service of his King. We shall have occasion to talk again about this journey.

[1] Clément the Tenth, who died July 2, 1676. It is plain, that the ridiculous pride of the Bishop de Noyon, led him to speak of the Pope as of an equal.

[2] The Bishop of Marseilles had the nomination of the King of Poland.

[3] Marie-Jeanne-Baptiste of Savoie-Nemours, who was Regent for her son Victor-Amédée François.

Madame de Schomberg most certainly loves and esteems you highly, and thinks you superior to any other person; it will depend upon yourself this winter not to destroy all this; she is however not satisfied with M. de Grignan, whom she has always loved, because he is amiable, and because her friend adores him. She thought that, knowing she was so near Provence, he ought to have come four or five leagues to see her, and offer her all the accommodations in his power, which, however, she would not have accepted. This is a kind of amorous reproach.

Listen to me, my dear child: when the Governor of Maëstricht [1] made his famous sally, the Prince of Orange flew to the assistance of his troops with incredible valour, and repulsed our people sword in hand, to the very gates; in doing this, he was wounded in the arm: upon which, turning to some who had not behaved well, "This is the way you should have acted, gentlemen," said he; "you are the cause of this wound, for which you appear so much concerned." The Rhinegrave followed him, and received a wound in the shoulder. There are places, in which it is so dangerous to give this action all the praises it merits, that it is thought better to take no notice of the advantage we have gained.

I have just heard for a truth, that the rejoicings at Versailles are deferred for some days. You are perfectly easy I find respecting the state of La Brinvilliers' soul: no one can doubt the justice of God; and it is with infinite regret, I find myself obliged to resume the opinion of eternal punishment.

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[1] M. de Calvo commanded in Maëstricht during the siege, in the place of Maréchal d'Estrades, who was the Governor.

LETTER 443

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, August 5, 1676.

I will begin to-day with my health; I am very well, my dear child. I have seen the honest de Lorme since his return here, and he has severely scolded me for not going to Bourbon; but this is all nonsense, for he acknowledges that the waters of Vichy are as good for drinking: "But then you should sweat, said he;" and so I have, even to excess; consequently there is no occasion for changing my former opinion as to the choice of place. He is not for my drinking the waters in autumn, but will have me begin the powders in September. He says nothing need be done for the little one, and that its skull will harden like that of others in time. Bourdelot has told me the same thing, and that the bones are the last parts completed. He is for my walking a great deal, and is sending me to Livry.

It is a sign La Brinvilliers is dead, by my having so much leisure time upon my hands. However, I have something to say about Penautier: his clerk, Belleguise, is taken: it is not known whether this will be the better or the worse for him; people, in general, are so disposed to think favourably of him, that I believe, if he were to be hanged at last, some excuse would be found for him. It is said at Court, that the King had this clerk apprehended in the out-skirts of the town. The Parliament is greatly blamed for its negligence; and, after all, it appears that the discovery of this man was owing to the diligence and liberality of the attorney-general [1], and that the search cost him above two thousand crowns. I was a whole hour yesterday in company with this magistrate, who, beneath the garb of gravity, conceals a very amiable and accomplished mind. M. de Harlai-Bonneuil was with me: I dare not tell you

[1] Achille de Harlai, afterwards first President.

how well I was received; he talked a great deal to me about you and M. de Grignan.

Aire has at length been taken. My son writes me a thousand handsome things of the Comte de Vaux[1], who was one of the foremost in action; but, at the same time, greatly censures the besieged, who suffered us to take, in one night, the covered way, the counterscarp, to pass a ditch full of water, and possess ourselves of the out-works of the finest horn-work that ever was seen, and at last capitulated without striking a blow. They were so thunder-struck with the fire of our artillery, that the muscles of the back which act in turning, and those which move the legs for flight, were not to be stopped by the wish of acquiring renown; and this it is that makes us take so many towns. M. de Louvois has all the honour of this affair; he has unlimited power, and makes armies advance, or retire, as he thinks proper. While all this was doing, there were great rejoicings at Versailles; they took place on the Saturday, notwithstanding what was said to the contrary, and were the prelude to the news of this success. In short, there are continual feasts and balls; for the King's good fortune, joined to the abilities of those who serve him, give us every hope of success, without the fear of being disappointed. My mind is quite easy at present respecting military affairs.

I have just had a letter from Cardinal de Retz, in which he takes leave of me before he goes to Rome. He set out on Sunday the second instant, and will take the same road as you and I did once, where we were so prettily overturned; he goes straight to Lyons, from whence, with the rest of his brethren, he takes the road to Turin, because His Majesty cannot spare them his galleys; so that you will not have the pleasure of seeing his dear Eminence. I am uneasy about his health; he was under a course of medicine, but made everything give way to the pressing entreaties of his Royal Master, who wrote to him with his own hand. I hope the change of air, and diversity of ob-

[1] M. Fouquet's son.

jects, will do him more service than living and studying in solitude.

So M. de Grignan is with you at last; I wish you had treated him like a stranger: he certainly performs wonders for His Majesty's service, and I take care to say so on all occasions; for I frequently talk of him with d'Hacqueville, who has so perfectly restored peace and harmony among the Gramont family, that not a word is mentioned about anything; they may thank his prudent and wise management for this, for there were doubtless materials in the affair to have furnished ample matter of diversion to the public. Your replies to the idle things I wrote to you, are infinitely preferable to the things themselves. Nothing can be more pleasant than not saying a word to M. de La Garde, of a thing, that, at the same time, takes up all your attention: pray let me know when I may write to him upon this subject.

I return M. de Grignan many thanks, for his goodness to the Chevalier de Sévigné, when he saw him at Toulon. He is my godson, you know; I have had a letter from him, written in all the transports of gratitude. If M. de Grignan should have an opportunity of speaking or writing in his favour, it would delight me. He is quite weary of being a Lieutenant. I have been told he is a brave youth, and very deserving of a ship. If M. de Grignan is of the same opinion, you will do well to put him in mind of him.

M. de Coulanges is going soon to Lyons; he means to return before All Saints, which will be just about the time of your coming here. I would advise you to concert measures for coming together; he will steer your bark gaily, and you will be infinitely pleased with such a companion.

I think the *pigeon* very pretty, and you will be of infinite service to him, by amusing yourself, as you do, with his dawning reason; this attention to his improvement will be a great advantage to him. Forgive all his little faults, which he honestly confesses, but never overlook a lie.

When you read the *History of the Viziers,* let me advise you not to stop at the *heads cut off* and lying on the table; do not shut the book at this passage, but continue till you come to the son [1]; and then, if you find a more truly honest man among the whole race of Christians, say I have deceived you.

You are apprehensive, you say, my dear child, that I am awkward with my hands: not in the least; this inconvenience I suffer affects only myself, and is not perceptible to anyone else. In a word, I am as like, as two drops of water, to your *bellissima,* except that I have a finer shape than formerly; but you are, after all, too good and kind, in thinking so much of my health. Be under no uneasiness about Livry. I shall conduct myself there with great prudence, and shall return before the fogs come on, provided it be to meet you. I expect from Parère [2] this little business of the fines of Briançon; if he says you must purchase them, we will learn to belie our great Diana [3].

I have a little story to relate to you, which you may believe as firmly as if you had been an ear-witness to it. The King said, a few mornings ago, "I am of opinion that we shall not be able to relieve Philisbourg; but, after all, I shall not be less King of France." M. de Montausier [4], who would not say a thing he did not think for the Pope himself, replied, "It is certain, Sire, you would not be less King of France, though the enemy were to retake Metz, Toul, Verdun, and the whole Franche Comté, together with a number of other Provinces, which your predecessors did very well without." Upon this everyone present was struck dumb. But the King replied with a

[1] Achmet Coprogli, pacha, was made Grand Vizier upon the death of Mahomet Coprogli, his father. The Lives of the Father and Son are very entertaining and interesting.

[2] M. de Pomponne's principal secretary.

[3] He was a regular clergyman of Palermo in Sicily, and is often mentioned in the *Petites Lettres,* for having favoured in his writings the relaxed opinions in favour of morals.

[4] Preceptor to the King's children, and remarkable for speaking his mind the most openly of any person at Court.

very good grace, "I understand you perfectly, M. de Montausier; you mean to say, that you think my affairs are in a bad situation; but I take what you say in good part, as I am convinced of your loyalty and affection." All this is strictly true, and I think each supported his character admirably.

The Baron (de Sévigné) is very well. The Chevalier de Nogent, who is come express with the news of the capture of Aire, has mentioned him to the King as a person who has given proofs of his attachment to his service. The Duc is very gay; he hunts, he goes to Chantilly and Liancourt: in a word, they are all glad to make hay while the sun shines. M. de Nevers is under no uneasiness about his wife, for her conduct is strictly correct; he considers her almost as his daughter, and if she were to give herself the least airs of coquetry, he would be the first to perceive, and chide her for it; she is with child, and very languid. My niece de Coligny [1] is brought to bed of a son; she says she shall take a great pride in bringing him up. So then Pauline is the Comte's favourite, and her sister Colette [2] thinks of nothing but a veil!

LETTER 444

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, August 7, 1676.

To-morrow I go to Livry, my dear; it is necessary that I should, or, at least, I think so. But this will not prevent my writing to you as usual, nor will our correspondence suffer the least interruption from it. I have seen some of the folks from Court; and they are persuaded that Théobon's opinion is ridiculous, and that *Quanto's* power was never more firmly established. She now finds

[1] Louise de Rabutin, Marquise de Coligny.

[2] M. de Grignan's eldest daughter by his first wife.

herself superior to all opposition, and has no more apprehensions of the little sluts her nieces, than if they were turned to charcoal[1]. As she has a great share of understanding, she appears to be quite exempt from the fear of having shut up the wolf in the sheepfold. Her beauty is extreme; her dress equal to her beauty, and her sprightliness equal to her dress.

The Chevalier de Nogent[2] has again mentioned the Baron to the King, as having done things even beyond what his duty exacted of him, and he has said the same to a thousand others. M. de Louvois is returned, covered with laurels and applause. I fancy Vardes will bring you the Grand-Master, who is going to receive a trifling legacy of four hundred thousand crowns. Vardes will wait for him at Saint-Esprit, and I have a notion will take him with him to Grignan; perhaps, too, they may think of no such thing.

M. du Maine is an extraordinary child; he is deficient neither in tone of voice nor shrewdness; he has a blow every now and then, as well as the rest of the Court, at M. de Montausier; this occasioned my expression of *l'iniqua corte*. Seeing him one day pass by his window with a little wand in his hand, he called out to him, "What, M. de Montausier, never without the bâton of office?" Give to this the tone and meaning with which it was uttered, and you will not find many such instances in a child of six years old. But he is every day saying a thousand such things. A few days ago he supped on the canal in a gondola, near that in which the King was: he has been told not to call him papa; but having occasion to drink, he said aloud, "The King my father's health," and then threw himself into Madame de Maintenon's lap ready to die with laughing. I know not why I have singled out these two things to tell you, for I assure you they are the most trifling of any he has said.

[1] Madame de Nevers, and Mademoiselle de Thianges, afterwards Duchess of Sforce.

[2] See the preceding Letter 443.

The King has presented M. Le Grand's son with the late Bishop of Alby's fine Abbey (of Chastelliers), valued at twenty-five thousand livres per annum. My zeal in your affairs has led me to speak in person to M. Picon about your pension, who told me that the Abbé de Grignan had it in his power to bring it about, so that I have nothing to do but to rouse the handsome Abbé, without seeming to follow his steps, for I always distrust indolent people. I am indolent only in my own affairs: I wish other people were like me. The handsome Abbé has interrupted me, and has assured me, he will order matters so, that we shall have no occasion to fear having our pension. Write a line or two to him, and that will stimulate him to perform wonders; he will likewise settle the Marquis's patent in a proper manner. Parère promises me every day to expedite the fines; he is a strange friend: he stammered out a thousand protestations to me the other day: I believed the affair settled, and nothing is done yet. I have also seen what was written to the handsome Abbé on the reconciliation of the father and son; nothing can be more entertaining. This retreat in the midst of an Archbishopric, and this Thébaïde in the Rue St. Honoré, have extremely diverted me. Retreats do not always succeed; they should be carried into execution without talking of them; but they have promised the Abbé to inform him of the subject of this curious reconciliation, with which I am greatly edified. Let me beg, my dear child, that I may hear it from you.

We wait in trembling expectation for news from Germany; a great battle must have taken place there: however, I shall go to Livry, whoso loves, let him follow me. Corbinelli has promised to come and teach me to look on, as I told you the other day. This has diverted me highly.

LETTER 445

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Begun at Paris the 11th, and finished at Livry, Wednesday, August 12, 1676.

Old de Lorme, Bourdelot, and Vesou, have forbidden me to think of Vichy again this year; they think it would not be prudent to venture upon one dose of heat so close upon another: as to next year, it is another affair; we shall see how it will be; but let d'Hacqueville say what he pleases, there is no daring to venture upon this journey, in direct opposition to the advice of those very physicians who were so ready to send me there when they thought it necessary: I am not at all obstinate, but suffer myself to be led, with a docility I did not possess before my illness. You will be rejoiced to find me as I am: the little infirmity that hangs about me, is so trifling, as to deserve neither your regard nor uneasiness.

D'Hacqueville is to have another interview with M. de Pomponne, in which he will thoroughly discuss your affairs, and will acquaint you with the result. I write this before I set out for Livry, where I purpose being to-morrow morning, and where I shall finish this.

I wish you could see the description you have given me of the *pigeon's* shape. I am glad it was so exaggerated by your apprehensions, for at last it will turn out that he is a very pretty little fellow, with a great deal of understanding; and this is the mighty affair that I was to call a consultation of matrons about. Nothing can surely be more diverting, than what you say about La Si***. What a head! Can she have the confidence to show herself when you are present? What the Grenoble ladies said is so droll, and so just, that I cannot help thinking you have said it for them. There is too much imagination in it for provincial manners.

The Archbishopric of Alby is given to M. de Mende [1], but loaded with twelve thousand francs in pensions, viz. three thousand to the Chevalier de Nogent, three thousand to our friend M. d'Agen, and six thousand to M. de Nevers. I can see no reason for the latter, unless it is to increase the band of music that he keeps for his diversion every evening.

How delighted I am, that you have finished the *Viziers*! Tell me, truly, do you not love the last of them? It must be owned, that this book is not well written; but, nevertheless, the events are well worth reading. It seems as if this Queen of Poland were not coming after all; perhaps she is waiting for the Grand-Seigneur or the Grand-Vizier we are so much in love with.

The Princess d'Harcourt [2] was delivered of a dead child six weeks ago, and was very near death, but she is now better; and what will complete her cure is, that they have removed her to Clagny that the noise of the town may not disturb her. Madame de Montespan takes the greatest care imaginable of her: God knows whether she will show proper gratitude.

From Livry.

I have just received your letter of the second. You have been at St.-Esprit, you see what it is to be very much tired: you might, however, have written only two lines to me; I should have taken it very kindly of you. It would have been curious if you had stumbled upon the Grand-Master there; I know you are of opinion, that I should have been more diverted with the adventure than you. I am in hopes I shall see Gourville soon; I will speak to him about the affair of Vénejan: it is a charming situation; I would not have it sold for a song, as estates are sold now in France. Poor Le Tellier has purchased Barbesieux,

[1] Hyacinthe Serroni, Bishop of Mende, and the first Archbishop of Alby, was a Dominican friar at the time that he followed Cardinal Mazarin out of Italy into France. Mazarin himself had been a monk, and general of the same order.

[2] Françoise de Brancas, wife of Alphonse-Henri-Charles de Lorraine, Prince d'Harcourt.

one of the most beautiful estates in the kingdom, at sixteen years' purchase: it is perfectly ridiculous. Perhaps the Prince de Conti, or his Council, would choose to purchase in this manner, as you do not sell Vénejan by a decree. As for Caderousse, I can see no hopes of making up matters with him, but by playing his game of three for him against M. de Grignan. I beg you would use no ceremony in sending me the bride's commissions: pray consider me as one of the cabbages in your garden: I shall be delighted to take a trip to Paris on so good an errand. The good d'Escars will show us some of her dexterity with pleasure. You have only to employ us, and you will have reason to be satisfied with our services.

I am informed from Paris, that there is no news from Germany yet. The uneasiness that is felt on account of the approaching battle, which is thought to be unavoidable, is like a violent fit of the colic, and has lasted now almost a fortnight. M. de Luxembourg kills us with couriers, whereas poor M. de Turenne never sent any: after gaining a victory, he informed us of it by the post. Our Flemish *chanoines* are in perfect health; as is our good hermit, who wrote to me on the seventeenth from Lyons, where he arrived in five days from his hermitage. He waits the arrival of his colleagues; had it been left to him to fix the route, he tells me he should have been twelve days only in going from Lyons to Rome.

M. d'Hacqueville has had a good deal of conversation with M. de Pomponne, and nothing further can be done in the affair of your Marquisate, but to dispose of it with the title, which is sure to render an estate the more valuable; so that, if the purchaser is of the rank required, it will be easy for him to obtain letters in Chancery, creating him *Marquis de Mascarille.*

The Abbé de Chavigny is no longer our Bishop of Rennes, he prefers the expectation of the Bishopric of Poitiers; the Bishop of Dol has come to Rennes, and the Abbé de Beaumanoir to Dol. You wish me, my dear, to speak of the state of my health; it is even better here than

in Paris; the asthmatical symptoms disappeared at first view of the horizon of our little terrace: there have been no evening dews yet; on perceiving the least cold, I retire to my apartment. They have made a window in the little study, that opens into the garden, which perfectly removes the moist and unwholesome air that it formerly had: but besides this improvement, it is not in the least hot, for it has the sun upon it only an hour or two at its first rising. I am alone; the good Abbé is in Paris. I read with the Father-Prior, and am now engaged on the *Memoirs of M. de Pontis,* a gentleman of Provence, who died at Port-Royal about six years ago, upwards of four-score years of age. He gives an account of his life, and of the reign of Louis XIII.[1], with so much truth, simplicity, and good sense, that I can scarcely prevail upon myself to lay him aside. The Prince has read him from beginning to end with the same eagerness. This book has many admirers; there are some, however, who cannot endure it; and indeed one must either like or dislike it extremely, there is no such thing as observing a medium in this affair: I would not, however, swear you would like it.

The reason why you do not think you will be able to prevail on me to go to Vichy, which is, that I may see you and bring you back, is that, of all others, which would naturally determine me to it, and the only one in the world that seems worthy my attention. I should therefore set out without the least hesitation, were I persuaded this were at all necessary; but I think my bills accepted with too much honour, to be in any doubt of their being punctually paid. I shall therefore expect you, with all the joy you may possibly conceive, from an affection like mine.

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[1] Louis de Pontis, a gentleman of Provence, who, after having spent fifty-six years in the army in the service of three of our Kings, thought it time to retire in 1653, and to hide himself from the world, at Port-Royal des Champs, where he led a life of piety and penitence, and died June 24, 1670. As Thomas du Fossé was the person who arranged the Memoirs in question, this work was judged to belong to Port-Royal; and it is owing to this, that it was not equally well received by everyone.

LETTER 446

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Friday, August 14, 1676.

My dear child, I am in perfect health at this place: I am more sensible of the magnitude of my late illness, from my dread of a relapse, and my precautions with regard to the evening dews, than from anything else; for you remember the supreme pleasure I used to receive from fine evenings and moonlight. I thank you for thinking of me in that enchanting season. Mesdames de Villars, de Saint-Géran, d'Heudicourt, Mademoiselle l'Estranges, the *little soul,* and the little Ambassadress, came here yesterday at noon; the weather was charming. A slight suspicion of their intention occasioned a slight degree of Providence on my part, which furnished an excellent dinner. I have a very good cook; you shall give me your opinion of his performance. They tell me there is no news from Germany yet. It is dying by inches, to feel such uneasiness for ten or twelve days successively; the Marquise de La Trousse, who is returning from La Trousse, will discover her game all at once, such as it really is, good or bad; for she will suddenly open upon it, and suspense, like two equal players, will have no concern in the business. I am, however, of opinion, that the strongest love will not seek to spare itself: what think you?

The King has given M. du Plessis, Grand-Vicar of Notre-Dame, and a very worthy man, the Bishopric of Saintes: His Majesty said publicly, "I have this morning given away a Bishopric to one whom I never saw." This is the second: the other was the Abbé de Barillon, Bishop of Luçon. The beautiful Madame de Montespan begins to be somewhat weary of the public exhibition; she has been, for two or three days together, unable to put on her clothes. The King plays still, but not quite so long at a

time. If this change of scene does not last, it must be because it is too pleasing to continue. They affect to have no private hours; everybody is of opinion, that good policy requires that there should be none, and that, were it still the fashion, it would certainly be discontinued.

Madame de Villars is going to Savoie in good earnest, to play a very pretty part; she has a most magnificent carriage, lined with crimson velvet, a fine house, and everything else. One of her pleasures, she says, will be, that she will fall in love with nobody in that country; a melancholy sort of pleasure truly. That of d'Heudicourt, who is returning to her own house for some weeks, is not a whit more gay. The manner of that country, as you know, is to overwhelm you with embraces enough almost to turn one's brain, and presently after not to know you; but, above all, to take everything with an air of the greatest indifference possible. This unconcernedness well deserves to be repaid in kind by poor mortals, but there is bird-lime in their very looks. Farewell, my beautiful charming child: I do not now chatter at the rate I used to do at Paris; I am sorry for it, on your account, since my descriptions amuse you.

LETTER 447

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Wednesday, August 19, 1676.

I must chide you, my child, for bathing yourself in that little river, which, by the bye, is no river, and which only assumes that great name, as some folks do that of great families: it however deceives nobody, all the world knows how the matter is: and here comes a M. Le Laboureur, who has laid open its source, and proves, that its true name is *the Fountain*; but neither that of Vaucluse, of Arethusa, nor of Youth; but a little fountain without a

name, and without renown; this is the noble stream in which you have been bathing. I am almost dead with fear, lest you should have caught the rheumatism by this bold step, or at least a violent cough; nor shall I be cured of my apprehension, till I hear how you are. Heavens! had I done this, what a life you would have led me!

I suppose you already know that the German mountain is brought to bed of a mouse at last, without pain, or so much as a groan. One of our friends, whom you love in proportion to his care of me, tells me he is perfectly at a loss how to keep you and me within bounds on this occasion; that a devil of a wood was discovered on the map, which hemmed us in so as to render it impossible for us to draw up in order of battle, except in the face of the enemy; for which reason, we were obliged to retreat on the tenth, and to abandon Philisbourg to the brutality of the Germans. M. de Turenne had never discovered this wood, so that we find every day less reason to lament his loss. We are, moreover, in fear for Maëstricht, because the army of our allies is in no condition to succour it. It would be a fresh disappointment, were the Swedes to be driven out of Pomerania. The Chevalier de Grignan informs me the Baron played the fool at Aire; he placed himself in the trenches, and on the very counterscarp, with as much indifference and unconcern, as if he had been at home by his fire-side. He had taken it into his head, that he should have the regiment of Rambures, though it was that very instant given away to the Marquis de Feuquières; in this idea, he exposed himself as if he had been a common sentinel.

You wish a formal reconciliation to take place with Madame d'Heudicourt; this cannot be [1]. We must leave it to time to efface impressions; we may see her again: her easy manners are pleasing; she is formed for trifling; she does not strike the imagination with anything new; and if she is indifferent about us, we know how to do without

[1] She had spoken ill of Madame Scarron, and a quarrel had, in consequence taken place between them.

her: one advantage, however, she certainly has over all others, that we are accustomed to her. She is now, then, in her carriage, and, as her apartment is wanted, is going away: there is not much zeal however displayed, in procuring another: another time will do for that. This is the sandy foundation upon which we build, and this the broken reed to which we trust.

The Archbishop (of Arles) writes us some astonishing things of your care and attention to him. I can never sufficiently praise you for your conduct in this particular, which is at once so just and proper. There are certain duties of civility, which I hold absolutely indispensable; nothing can possibly excuse, in my opinion, ingratitude. It is to this good and venerable patriarch you owe the order and regularity of your house, and if you have the misfortune to lose him, his loss would be, indeed, irreparable.

They who betted that our worthy Cardinal would go to Rome, have certainly won. He reached Lyons two days before the rest of the company; I am persuaded, like you, that this step was necessary, because he has taken it, but it will be a difficult matter to make the rest of the world believe so. I say the same with respect to the marriage of M. de La Garde. It is really pleasant to hear the Marquise d'Uxelles [1] speak as coolly of it, as of a friend who has deceived her, and done her a bad turn.

I commend you exceedingly for returning to your old way of bathing in your chamber. Should you observe any of the subjects of my letters out of place, I must inform you it is owing to this; that as I receive one of yours on the Saturday, I cannot be easy till I have written an answer to it; on Wednesday morning I receive another, so that I frequently resume the topics I had mentioned before; this may make me appear rather impertinent, but I have told you the reason. It is now more than a fort-

[1] Marie de Bailleul, mother of the late Maréchal d'Uxelles, had been the friend of M. de La Garde, with whom she kept a regular epistolary correspondence during several years, which turned wholly on the news of the Court and the town.

night since I answered your letter, relative to d'Alby. M. de Mende has received it loaded with pensions.

I am told the fine *Lady* has been seen again in her fine apartment, as usual; and that the secret of her uneasiness was a slight fit of anxiety about her friend, and Madame de Soubise. If there is anything in this, we shall soon see the latter wither in her bloom; there is no such thing as forgiveness, even for the bare misfortune of pleasing.

As to my health, I am perfectly well; my complaints have entirely left me, and I think the rheumatism has now taken its final leave of me. I no longer expose myself to the evening dews, and either employ my time at home, or take an airing on the hills in my carriage. The moonlight, it must be allowed, is a prodigious temptation; but I have hitherto withstood its allurements. In short, you may make yourself perfectly easy in regard both to my hands and knees. I shall have recourse to my ointment, and will take some of the good man's powder, as soon as the dog-days are over. It is true, I leave it entirely to you to manage me in whatever way you think fit, and really believe you will be of more service to me than five hundred doctors.

M. Charrier tells me, that Cardinal de Retz set out two days before his colleagues. I am no longer spoken to on this topic; I am too well known, and have had the honour to be treated like one of the d'Hacquevilles; but I can unriddle, for all that, what they would say to me, if they durst. I am sorry your Cardinal [1] does not go the same road with the rest. For my part, I cannot get it out of my head, that our Cardinal will do something very unexpected and extraordinary; either resign his hat on this occasion, or live a retired life, or be made Pope; this last is attended with some difficulty: in short, I am of opinion that something will happen out of the common way. He has written me two lines from Lyons. There is reason to be uneasy about his health; and it will be a miracle if the

[1] Jérôme de Grimaldi, Archbishop of Aix.

heat, the journey, or the Conclave, do not injure him in this respect.

I was yesterday evening in the avenue which leads to this place, when I saw a coach and six advancing towards us, and who should it contain but the good Maréchal d'Estrées, the *chanoine,* the Marquise de Senneterre, whom the Abbé de La Victoire calls the *mitte,* and the fat Abbé de Pontcarré! We had a great deal of chat, walked, supped, and at last my company set out by the light of my old friend the moon. Madame de Coulanges uses the bath; Corbinelli has something the matter with his eyes; and Madame de La Fayette has given over taking the air in her coach. For my own part, I employ myself in receiving and answering your letters; I read, I walk, I feed my imagination on the hopes of seeing you; so that I am not an object of compassion. The Abbé de La Vergne seems exceedingly zealous about your conversion: I think it not likely to happen soon; at least, if it is like Madame de Schomberg's. Her merit, it must be acknowledged, is very much humanised, and she has always had abundance for those of her acquaintance; this light, so long hid under a bushel, now enlightens the whole world; she is not the only person on whom change of fortune has wrought miracles. We quarrel with honest d'Andilly, for being more zealous to save a soul lodged in a fair body, than any other. I say the same of the Abbé de La Vergne, whose merit and reputation here are greatly increased; I think you very fortunate in having him. Does he leave Provence? and is he to return there again? Nothing can be more amusing than your vision of the turtle Sablière. She taught her mate the way to her heart. She purchased the bed which belonged to the deceased, for reasons that you will not be at a loss to guess.

The friend [1] of Madame de Coulanges is still in high favour. If our little friend [2] is really attached to that good country, it must be owing to the transitory pleasure she

[1] Madame de Maintenon.

[2] Madame de Coulanges.

receives in it; it is impossible she should be weak enough to be the dupe of that show of friendship and affection they take so much pains to lavish on her. I know nothing of Madame de Monaco. Everything at the home of de Gramont is hidden under the impenetrable discretion of d'Hacqueville; and, for all that, everything is exactly on the same footing as it was at the home of de Grancey, except the meagreness and languor of the Prince, which savours so strongly of La Brinvilliers. The Abbé de Grignan will inform you of what relates to Penautier; I lose a thousand scraps of intelligence by being here. M. de Coulanges sets out for Lyons with Madame de Villars. I think, when he is once there, he ought to be under your government. You may at least be perfectly easy with regard to his management; you could not possibly have a better pilot. The good Abbé has the most perfect regard and friendship for you; he frequently drinks your health; and when the wine is good, expatiates greatly in your praise, and tells me I do not love you sufficiently. Adieu; I am in no apprehension of such a reproach before God.

My preceptors in philosophy[1] have been somewhat neglectful of me. La Mousse has gone to Poitou with Madame de Sanzei[2]. The Father-Prior (of Livry) would be glad to be instructed too; it is a pity so good an intention should be disappointed. We are reading in gloomy mood, the little treatise on the *Passions* (of Descartes), and we see how well the nerves of M. de Luxembourg's back have been arranged for a retreat. But do you know that all of a sudden they have left off speaking of Germany at Versailles? One fine morning, on some persons asking what news from Germany, out of mere concern for their country, they were answered, "Why inquire about news from Germany, there are no couriers from there, none to come, none expected; to what purpose then ask for news?" And there it ended.

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[1] Messieurs de La Mousse and Corbinelli.

[2] She was sister of M. de Coulanges.

LETTER 448

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, August 21, 1676.

I came here this morning to execute the commissions of M. de La Garde. I alighted at the house of the good d'Escars, whom I found in a bilious fever, but full of kindness and good-will. The mantua-maker, Madame Le Moine, was with her, and she was surrounded with the finest laces, French and Spanish, in the world. I dined at M. de Mêmes'; and at three returned to Madame d'Escars; on entering the court-yard, I met Madame de Vins and d'Hacqueville, who came very politely to see me. We selected a very beautiful gown and petticoat, some gold and silver stuff for a *toilette,* lace for the petticoat and for the *toilette,* as well as a great many other articles, all of which will be incomparably beautiful: but as I have ordered them all in my own name, and on very short credit, let me beg you not to leave me exposed to the uncertainty of the payment of M. de La Garde's pensions, but to send me a bill of exchange. M. Colbert is a little indisposed; were you to know the use that is made of this pretext, even with regard to your pension, you would easily be convinced, that nothing is equal to a bill of exchange; as for the poor courtiers, who are accustomed to patience, they will wait the happy moment at the Royal Treasury. The handsome Abbé [1] is this moment coming in; he came to see me on Wednesday at Livry, we had a long conversation about your affairs. The Coadjutor certainly ought never to be proposed [2], but as a most proper and worthy person, without its even coming to light, that he has ever

[1] The Abbé de Grignan, brother of the Coadjutor of Arles.

[2] The business in question was the Archbishopric of Alby, which was thought to be still vacant, from a report that M. de Mende had refused it.

bestirred himself in the least about it; since he ought to appear to the world as fixed, and satisfied in every respect, with his present position. We would only endeavour to make sure of the Archbishop (of Arles); that is, to dispose him to receive such other person, for Coadjutor, as might be proposed to him: and even this must be transacted merely by the confessor, it not being within M. de Pomponne's district, who, however, would certainly not fail to support it, if occasion offered. But it is believed here, that, notwithstanding the report that has been current, of M. de Mende's refusal of Alby, he will yet accept it; if this be true, all our conferences are in vain. As for the government, the son is to have the reversion of it, and *Matame te Lutres* will be well enough satisfied with this acknowledgment, on her quitting the dress [1] she has worn so long. We are also told that Théobon, whether she has merited this establishment or not, would be very glad to have it: so you see on what this affair turns. I love the handsome Abbé for his great zeal in your affairs, and for calling so often to consult about them with me, who, by the bye, am far from being such a fool in this respect, I suppose from the interest I take in them, as I am in all other worldly matters.

We spent a very pleasant evening at Livry; and have this day come to a determination with the great d'Hacqueville, that all our solicitations are in vain for this time, but that we ought not, for all that, to lose so fair an occasion of presenting our request. Madame de Vins entreats me to return to-morrow, and to be at Madame de Villars' between five and six, where she will meet me. We may possibly see M. de Pomponne in the evening, who will return from Pomponne, where Madame de Vins could not go, on account of a law-suit, for she is never without one, which is always to be determined to-morrow. I must own I feel myself strongly tempted by her proposal; so that, to all appearance, I shall put off my departure till Sunday, when I propose to hear mass at Livry. They smell a rat

[1] She was Canoness of Poussai.

at *Quanto's,* but no one can tell exactly where: the lady whom I mentioned to you has been named; but as the gentry of that country are esteemed deep politicians, it is possibly not there either. One thing, however, is past all doubt; the gentleman seems gay, cheerful, and quite himself; whilst the damsel appears sad, confused, and sometimes in tears. I will tell you more of this when I am able.

Madame de Maintenon is gone to Maintenon for three weeks. The King has sent Le Nôtre to embellish that beautifully ugly place. I have as yet seen nothing of the handsome Madame de Coulanges, nor of my Corbinelli. Maréchal Schomberg's army is going to succour Maëstricht; though everybody thinks the enemy will not wait his coming, either because the place is already taken, or that the siege has been raised; they are, it seems, not strong enough. My dear, amiable child, adieu.

LETTER 449

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Wednesday, August 26, 1676.

I fancy you discover that I answer both your letters on Wednesdays; on Fridays, I live at the public charge, or at least on my own stock; that is, I contrive to write now and then, a very poor epistle. I am now expecting your last letter, and yet am going to attempt to answer your other, as well as to inform you of my proceedings for several days past. I wrote to you on Friday, the Abbé de Grignan being then at my elbow; I told you Madame de Vins and d'Hacqueville had entreated me to go with them the next day to Madame de Villars', where they said they would meet me. We spent two hours there very agreeably; I stayed therefore purely out of my great love and regard for them. I had, before that, been at Madame de La Fayette's, for I must clear my conscience.

La Saint Géran showed us a very pretty letter, which you and M. de Grignan had jointly written; we admired your economy. After that, I went to Mademoiselle de Méri's, and Sunday morning returned to this place, after having paid my respects, on the two evenings, to Madame de Coulanges, and Corbinelli. The former uses the bath; she tells me she intends to come to me soon, the time must be left to her own discretion. You know the pleasure I take in executing your commands, and that I never value myself upon any trifling services: I am even charmed with being thought nothing of; a pleasure we are sure to enjoy, if we live to be old. Corbinelli is willing to come down if I desire him to do so; and I am resolved I never will. In the meanwhile, the worthy Marquise d'Uxelles, whom I have loved so many years, desired I would not fail to return to partake of a dinner she was to give M. de La Rochefoucauld, M. and Madame de Coulanges, Madame de La Fayette, and others. I thought I discovered, in her manner and voice, what was sufficient to determine me to undergo the fatigue. This entertainment happened to be on the Monday, so that, though I came back on Sunday, I returned Monday morning to the Marquise's from this place. She gave this dinner at her neighbour Longueil's [1]. The house is really very pretty; nothing could exceed the order and regularity of the servants; so that this change gave great satisfaction. When the company came, I had been there some time, scolding at their being so late. Instead of M. and Madame Coulanges, who could not be there, we had Briole, the Abbé de Quinçay, and Mademoiselle de La Rochefoucauld. The repast, the conversation, everything deserved the highest encomiums: we broke up late. I returned to Madame d'Escars', that I might a second time admire the beauty of the lace and stuffs; everything will be very, very handsome. From thence I went to

[1] The same, no doubt, who, at the beginning of the Fronde, agitated the Parliament, of which he was a member. He was brother of the President de Maisons, who built the beautiful seat which is called by his name, by means of a treasure which was found in his house at Paris, concealed there from the reign of Charles IX.

Madame de Coulanges's; and was scolded for having thought of returning. They would detain me, they knew not why, and I returned on Thursday morning, which was yesterday, and had taken a turn in the garden, before the folks at Paris had the least thought about me.

The anxieties respecting Germany have been transferred to Flanders. The army of Maréchal Schomberg is on its march, and will be, on the twenty-ninth, in a situation to relieve Maëstricht. But what afflicts us as good Frenchwomen, and, at the same time, consoles us as being interested in the affair, is, that it is generally believed, they will come too late, let them use what diligence they may. Calvo has not men sufficient to relieve the guard: the enemy will make a last effort, and the more so, as it is believed, beyond all doubt, that Villa Hermosa [1] has entered the lines, and is to join the Prince of Orange, in order to give a general assault; this is the hope I found at Paris, and of which I have told you as much as it was possible for me to do, that I might compose myself for taking M. de Lorme's powders, as we have now got out of these dog-days, which it seems have made the usual demands; can this be what they call the dog-days? The little queens of Paris say, that *Marphorio* asks *Pasquin,* how it happens that Philisbourg and Maëstricht should both be taken in one year; and that Pasquin answers, that it is because M. de Turenne is at St. Denis, and the Prince at Chantilly.

Corbinelli will answer your questions, with regard to the size of the moon, and the causes of the sensations of bitter and sweet. He has convinced me as to the dimensions of the moon; but I do not understand the sensations of the palate quite so well. He says, whatever does not seem sweet to us is bitter: I know there are no such things as sweet and bitter; but I make use of the expression, by which we call things abusively or improperly sweet and bitter, that I may make myself understood by the ignor-

[1] Governor of the Spanish Netherlands, and General of the forces of that Crown.

ant and the vulgar. He has promised to enlighten me, upon this subject, when he comes. Nothing can be better than what you tell him in order to prevent my going out during the damps of the evening: I assure you, my child, I never venture abroad at that time; the very thought of contributing to your satisfaction, would be sufficient to work this miracle: besides, I have a mortal apprehension of relapsing again into my rheumatism. I resist the charms of that seducing enchantress, the moon, with a constancy and firmness worthy the highest panegyric: after such an effort as this, who will pretend to doubt my virtue, or, to speak with more propriety, my timidity? I have seen Madame de Schomberg; she loves and esteems you as it were in anticipation, so that you will find the ice already broken. The Abbé de La Vergne writes to her of you in high terms of praise, and she has spoken to me, in the same favourable manner, of him; there is not a person in the world for whom she has so great a regard; in short, he is her father, her best and truest friend; she relates a thousand good things of him, and it is an endless subject when once she gets upon it. She sees plainly that he respects you, and is desirous of acquiring your esteem; he has exquisite taste: she is sure you must like his ease and sweetness of temper, and thinks he has an undoubted right to make a convert of you, since you are persuaded that what he proposes is for your good. Had she been equally persuaded of the expediency of what he intended for herself, the business had been as good as done. You see, by our conversation, we do not reckon much on what comes from above. I desire you will talk to me of this Abbé, and let me know how long you have had him with you.

It is imagined *Quanto* is wholly reinstated in her felicity: it is for want of a subject of conversation, that we are told of so many revolutions. Madame de Maintenon continues still at Maintenon with Barillon and the *Tourte*[1]; she has desired some other persons to join her there, but the man, who, you once said, wished to set your mind upon the

[1] See Letter 448, of August 21st, 1676, in this volume.

trot, and who is a deserter from that Court, answered with great pleasantry, "that, at present, there was no lodging-room for friends; that what there was, was only fit for lacqueys." You see what an accusation is brought against this good head! and who is to be trusted after this? The favour in which she is, it must be allowed, is extreme, and it is certain that *Quanto's* friend speaks of her as of the principal, or at least as the second-best, friend he has in the world. He has sent her the most famous architect (Le Nôtre), who is to improve her house admirably. It is said that the Prince is to go there too; I suppose this was determined on yesterday at Madame de Montespan's: they are to travel post, without sleeping there at all. I return you a thousand thanks for your excellent account of a reconciliation, in which I take so much interest, and which I desired exceedingly, both for the consolation of the father, and to say the truth, for the honour of the son, that I might be at liberty to esteem him thoroughly. If the spectators were of my opinion, I congratulate them on the pleasure they must have experienced.

Your letter has just arrived in time for me to finish this. The prospect you give me of removing the horrors of a separation, is delightful indeed; nothing can have happier consequences with respect to my health, than this hope. The best beginning will be, to arrive; you will find me quite a different creature from what you expect; my poor knees, and the hands which have given you so much uneasiness, will certainly be perfectly cured by that time. In short, my present delicacy would be esteemed perfect vulgarity in another, so superabundantly was I provided with that noble quality, robust health. As for Vichy, I make not the least doubt of returning thither this summer. Vesou told me to-day, he wished it were this instant; but de Lorme tells me, I ought to be very careful how I venture on such a step at this season: Bourdelot says plainly, it is certain death, and that I forget my rheumatism took its rise from extreme heat. I love to consult these grave folks, merely that I may have the pleasure of laughing at

them; can anything be more ridiculous than this contrariety of opinions? The Jesuits were certainly in the right in advancing, that there were grave authors who maintained every probable opinion: you see then that I am at liberty to follow which I like best. My handsome physician of Chelles is now with me: I assure you he knows full as much, perhaps more, than any of them. I know you will rail at this encomium; but could you see how much care he has taken of me for these two or three days, and how finely he has checked the beginning of a disorder I thought I had entirely got rid of, and which I renewed at Paris, you could not help loving him exceedingly. In a word, I am perfectly recovered, and am under no necessity at all of being bled; I shall adhere strictly to his prescriptions, and afterwards take some of my old good man's powders. He thinks, from my present habit of body, that I shall not entirely be free from these returns for three years. They wanted to keep me in Paris; if I had not walked a great deal, I should not have been so well as I am. I conjure you, my child, to make yourself perfectly easy upon my account, and to think of affording me realities, after having fed me so long with flattering hopes only.

I received a note from our Cardinal from Lyons, and afterwards one from him at Turin. He tells me his health is much better than he could have expected, after so much fatigue. He seems so well pleased with M. de Villars, that he has gone to visit him at his villa. You know they are not to see the Duc (of Savoie), as they are to put him on a footing with the other Italian Princes, to whom they never give the lead; and that Duc is determined to behave exactly in the same manner with the Prince; that is to say, everyone is to do the honours after the manner of his own country. Do you not admire the rank and quality of those Cardinals? I am astonished ours has not written to you from Lyons; it was so natural.

Pray think seriously about the ill growth of your son; it is of sufficient importance to induce you to have a consultation. Things go on perfectly to our wishes with the

Coadjutor: but if there is a place in the universe to recover him after his fatigue, it is certainly in this country. As for that German, I am well informed that the Abbé de Grignan has no thoughts of equipping him till your return; this would not be worth the trouble it would cost, after waiting so very long. What has happened to you is really a little miracle; your embarrassment made us smile, to think you could not find out whether he is master of the delicacies of the German language, or whether you confound the Swiss with it. We think you will never be able to attain this nicety: you will undoubtedly confound the one with the other, and think the *pigeon* talks like a Swiss instead of speaking German. You divert us so much about Flanders and Germany, that with respect to the tranquillity of the one, and the confusion that prevails in the other, all we are able to say, is, *Let each take its turn.* Farewell, my dear and lovely child, I admire your pretty excuses about your saying so much of your son; I may ask your pardon, with equal justice, for talking to you so much about mine. The Baron writes me word, that he thinks they will not be able to reach the end of their journey in time, let them make what haste they will; I pray God what he says may prove true; I ask my country's pardon for saying so. You tell me nothing of the *said deponent*[1]; it is an infallible proof he has nothing more to say: will he never pronounce the long wished for *yes*? it is a beautiful word. I beseech him always to love me a little.

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[1] M. de La Garde.

LETTER 450

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Friday, August 28, 1676.

I ask my dear country's pardon for it, but I sincerely wish M. de Schomberg may never be able to come to action; his cool blood, and his manner so different from M. de Luxembourg's, make me apprehensive of consequences, as different as their characters. I have this moment been writing a note to Madame de Schomberg, to know what news there is from him. I discovered this lady's high and transcendent merit a long time ago; and I do not find it lessened since she has become a General's lady. She loves Corbinelli passionately; her mind had never turned to any kind of science, so that the novelty she finds in this conversation, will increase the charm of it. They say Madame de Coulanges will come here to-morrow with him: I shall be heartily glad of it, since it is to their love for me I shall owe this visit. I have desired d'Hacqueville to inform me of what I want to know respecting M. de Pomponne; and have written, for the twentieth time, I believe, to that little stammerer de Parère. I am sure he will give you just the answer he will write to me, and will besides tell you, that M. de Mende has accepted the Bishopric of Alby, notwithstanding the reports that have prevailed to the contrary. I am, moreover, reading the emblems of the Holy Scriptures [1], which begin from Adam. I have begun with the creation of the world, which you are so fond of, and shall end with the death of our Saviour, which you know is an admirable series. We find in it every circumstance, though related concisely; the style is fine; it is done by an

[1] *History of the Old and New Testament,* by M. de Sacy, Sieur de Royaumont. He composed this book in the Bastille. It is, they say, filled with allusions to the vicissitudes of Jansenism in that age. M. de Sacy was President of the nuns at Port-Royal.

eminent hand: the history is interspersed throughout with excellent reflections, taken from the Fathers, and is very entertaining. For my own part, I go much further than the Jesuits; and when I see the reproaches of ingratitude, and the dreadful punishments with which God afflicted his people, I cannot help concluding, that we, who are freed from the yoke to which they were subjected, are, in consequence, highly culpable, and justly deserve those scourges of fire and water, which the Almighty employs when he thinks fit. The Jesuits do not say enough on this subject, and others give cause to murmur against the justice of the Deity, in weakening the supports of our spiritual liberty, as they do. You see what fruit I derive from my reading. I fancy my confessor will enjoin me to read the philosophy of Descartes.

I suppose Madame de Rochebonne is now with you, and I present my respects to her. Is she glad to find herself in the house of her forefathers? Do they at the Chapter [1] pay their respects to her as they ought? Is she delighted with the sight of her nephews? And is it true that Pauline [2] goes by the name of Mademoiselle de Mazargues? I should be angry with myself if wanting in the respect due to her condition. And pray, is the little eight months' child likely to live a century? I am so often at Grignan, that I sometimes fancy you must see me amongst you. Oh! how charming would it be, could we transport ourselves in an instant, to the places where we are present in imagination! Here comes my handsome physician [3], who finds me in excellent health, and is proud of my having obeyed his orders for two or three days. The weather is cool, which might determine me to take my good man's powders: I will let you know on Wednesday. I hope those

[1] The collegiate Church of Grignan.

[2] Pauline Adhémar de Monteil de Grignan, grand-daughter of Madame de Sévigné, who was then three years old. She married, in 1695, Louis de Simiane, Marquis d'Esparron, the King's Lieutenant-General in Provence after the death of M. de Grignan his father-in-law.

[3] Amonio.

who are in Paris, have sent you all the news; I know none, as you see; my letter savours of the solitude of this forest, but it is a solitude in which you are perfectly adored.

LETTER 451

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Wednesday, September 2, 1676.

M. d'Hacqueville and Madame de Vins have slept here; they came, like good creatures as they were, to see us yesterday; they are excellent companions; you know how well we all agree together. Brancas is come too, to dream a while with his Sylph [1]. He and I, however, had a long talk about you; we admired your conduct, and the honour you have done him [2]. But what we all admired, was the good fortune of the King, who, notwithstanding the ineffectual, but too necessary measures M. de Schomberg was obliged to follow on his march, for the relief of Maëstricht, is informed that the mere approach of his troops has raised the siege. The enemy did not dare to risk an engagement: the Prince of Orange, who was sorry to abandon an enterprise that had given him so much trouble, was for venturing all; but Villa-Hermosa thought he ought not to hazard his troops, so that they have not only raised the siege, but even abandoned their ammunition and their cannon; in short, there is every mark of a precipitate retreat. It is the most fortunate thing in the world to have to do with Confederate forces, for we reap every sort of advantage from them; but the surest way is, to wish for whatever the King wishes; and then we are sure to have our wishes fulfilled. I was in great uneasiness; I had sent to Madame de Schomberg's, to Madame de St. Géran's, to d'Hacqueville's, when I was informed

[1] Madame de Coulanges.

[2] The Comte de Brancas had been the negotiator of the marriage between Mademoiselle de Sévigné and M. de Grignan.

of all these miracles. The King was not free from apprehension any more than we were. M. de Louvois made the utmost haste to acquaint His Majesty with the news of this good fortune; the Abbé de Calvo was with him; the King embraced him in transports of joy, and gave him an Abbey worth twelve thousand livres a year, a pension of twenty thousand livres, with the government of Aire to his brother, and a world of praises, of more value than all the rest. In this manner has the siege of Maëstricht been raised, and Pasquin proves to be a mere blockhead.

Young Nangis is to marry little de Rochefort; a very sad match. The Maréchale is still very much afflicted, in very ill health, and very much altered; she has eaten no meat since the death of her husband; I shall try to persuade her to continue this abstinence [1]. I have much talk with the good d'Hacqueville and Madame de Vins, who seems to have the greatest friendship for you imaginable; this, you will say, is no news; but it is always agreeable to learn that distance makes no alteration in the minds of our friends. We anticipate the pleasure of seeing you next month: for it is now September, and we know the next to that is October. I have taken some of my good man's powder; this grand remedy, which frightens all the world, is a trifle to me, and really works miracles on me. I had my handsome physician with me, which was no small comfort; he never spoke but in Italian, and told me a thousand diverting stories during the operation. It is he who advised my dipping my hands in the wine-tubs at the vintage; after that to use the stomach of an ox; and lastly, if there be occasion for it, the marrow of a deer, with Hungary-water. In short, I am determined not to wait till the return of winter; I am resolved to be cured, and well, before the fine season is entirely over. You see I am very careful of my health, and as I consider it as belonging to you, I do not see how I can do otherwise.

[1] This is a mere jest, which turns upon Madame de Grignan's wishing, for the honour of her sex, that grief should be lively and lasting.

Madame DE COULANGES *also writes to*
Madame DE GRIGNAN.

(*Enclosed in Madame* DE SÉVIGNÉ'S *letter.*)

Be ingenuous, Madame, and tell me whether you do not allow that I have just cause of complaint against you. I wrote to you from Lyons, never from Paris, and I now write to you from Livry. What shows I am in the right, is, that you take all in very good part: had you done me the favour to have reproached me for it, I should have been rejoiced, as I should then have seemed of some consequence to the world; but it is beneath you to find fault with such a poor mortal as I am. We lead here a very quiet and harmless kind of life: I beg you would exhort Madame de Sévigné to take care of her health; you know she refuses you nothing; she never goes out during the evening dews; her only comfort is, the hopes of seeing you here again: for my own part, I desire it with an eagerness to which I have no pretensions. You are so well informed already with respect to news, that I shall not take up your time, with giving you any. The King is so happy, that I cannot see how it is possible for him to form a wish to be more so. Adieu, Madame, you are expected with an impatience you deserve; this I may say without even the suspicion of exaggerating. Barillon finds no society worthy of his attention, when you are in Provence, except the Abbé de La Trappe's. But you must lend an attentive ear to M. de Brancas, who is going to hold forth to you.

Monsieur DE BRANCAS *also writes to*
Madame DE GRIGNAN.

(*Also enclosed in Madame* DE SÉVIGNÉ'S *letter.*)

It is impossible for me to be at Livry without thinking of Mademoiselle de Sévigné, or without reflecting, that if I have laboured to make M. de Grignan happy [1], it has

[1] See the second note at the foot of page 320, in this volume.

been to my own cost, since I suffer as much as man can do, from your long absence. Madame de Coulanges would fain make us believe, that there are some persons in the world who have reason to regret it still more: I have no desire to enter into a detail of her arguments, and will rest satisfied with assuring you, that you ought to return as quickly as possible, if you love your mother, Madame de Sévigné, who will certainly take no care of her health, till you have set her heart at ease. I have received, with pleasure and respect, your congratulations on the delivery of my daughter[1]. Believe me, Madame, it is impossible to honour you more affectionately than I do.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *continues and concludes her letter to her Daughter.*

I am afraid Madame de Coulanges will go to Lyons sooner than she thinks, or than she wishes; her mother is dying. I shall ask you soon, how you intend to travel to Lyons, and from thence to Paris. You know what you are to find at Briare.

You are perfectly right, to lay aside your apprehensions on account of Maëstricht and Philisbourg: you will be astonished to find how well everything has gone, and how much to our wishes. I regret the evacuation of bile that took place when we were upon the eve of a battle. Your sentiments are all worthy of a Roman matron; you are besides the finest woman in France; you see your credit does not sink among us. Corbinelli has been here these two days; he came back in haste to see the Grand-Master, who is since returned from Alby. I have a notion Vardes[2] contrives to do very well without Corbinelli, but he is satisfied with his continuing here in quality of his resident. It is he who keeps up the peace between Madame de

[1] The Princesse d'Harcourt. See Letter 445, of August 12th, 1676, in this volume.

[2] François-René du Bec, Marquis de Vardes, banished into Languedoc, on account of some Court intrigues.

Nicolaï[1] and her son-in-law; it is he who presides in all the projects formed for the little good lady[2]: nothing is done without Corbinelli; Corbinelli is the soul which moves all the springs of action. He spends, however, very little at Vardes, for he is virtuous, discreet, and philosophical. Besides, Corbinelli had rather be here, on account of his infirm state of health, than in Lanquedoc; this I take to be the grand secret of his long stay in Paris.

Madame de Soubise's vision has vanished more quickly than lightning; matters are now entirely made up. I told you that, the other day at play, *Quanto* leaned her head very familiarly on her friend's shoulder, as much as to say, "I am now happier than ever." Madame de Maintenon has returned to her own habitation; it is impossible to express the high degree of favour she is in: it is said, M. de Luxembourg, by his late conduct, intended to put the finishing stroke to M. de Turenne's funeral panegyric. They praise M. de Schomberg lavishly: they give him credit for a victory, supposing him to have fought a battle, so that he reaps the same honour almost as if he had really beaten the enemy. The good opinion of the public for this officer, is founded upon so many battles he has won, that we cannot help thinking he would have won this also, had he fought: the Prince places no one on a level with him, in his esteem. With regard to my health, my dear child, it is as good as you could wish; and when Brancas told you I take no care of it, it is because he has wanted me to begin dipping my hands in the vintage ever since July; but I am certainly going to use all the cures I told you of, that I may be beforehand with the winter. I shall go for a moment to Paris to see M. de La Garde's casket. I have seen it in separate pieces, but I want to see the whole together. Adieu, my lovely; my company are extremely uneasy at my absence. I will, therefore, close this packet.

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[1] Marie-Amelot, mother-in-law of M. de Vardes.

[2] Marie-Elisabeth du Bec, married in 1678 to Louis de Rohan-Chabot, Duc de Rohan.

LETTER 452

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, at Madame d'Escars',
Friday, September 4, 1676.

I dined at Livry, and came here at two o'clock: and am now surrounded with all our fine dresses; the linen appears to me perfectly beautiful and well chosen: in short, I am satisfied with every article, and doubt not, but it will give you as much satisfaction as it has me: our stuffs have succeeded as well as heart could wish. To say the truth, they have cost me abundance of pains: I am exactly in the situation of Molière's physician, who wipes his brow as if he had performed a miracle in restoring speech to a girl who had never been dumb. Yet for all that, we cannot sufficiently thank the good d'Escars; she was really very ill, and yet took infinite pains in the execution of this commission: I could not think of letting so many fine things go, without first taking a parting glance at them. I am now writing to you, and without having seen a soul, return to Livry to sup with Madame de Coulanges and the *worthy*; I shall be there at seven: can anything be more charming than this proximity? I have just received a note from d'Hacqueville, who thinks me at Livry: he will needs have me go to Vichy, but I fear I should overheat myself, and besides, I have not the least occasion for such a journey. I am going to set about curing my hands with the greatest calmness imaginable, during this vintage; I take these marks of his friendship in extreme good part, as I certainly ought, but will not, for all that, implicitly obey him: I have grave characters not a few on my side of the question; and what is a more powerful argument with me still, I find myself in perfect health.

Quanto has not been once at the dramatic representations, nor at the card-tables for two days. This wants

explaining. Every lady is a beauty; but this is the language of courtiers: the beauty of beauties, however, is gay, which is a good sign. Madame de Maintenon has returned; she promises Madame de Coulanges to take a journey purely on her account; a prospect which I assure you is far from turning her brain, whatever it might produce in others: she expects her, with all the calmness in the world, at Livry: nothing can be more obliging than she is to me. Maréchal d'Albret is dying. D'Hacqueville will inform you of the *Gazette* news, and of the great quantity of cannon and ammunition we have taken.

The *mitte* (Madame de Senneterre) is without her ring-dove, at least that of the finest wing. Do you not think she is a fool for her pains? is this a way to bring customers? M. de Marsillac is gone with Gourville to Poitou; M. de La Rochefoucauld is going after them, though it is a jaunt of a month at the lowest computation. But, my dear, it is high time for you to begin talking of your own journey: are you not still disposed to set out on your part, as soon as your husband is willing on his? This forwardness is not only convenient to you, but inexpressibly satisfactory to me. I approve of your bathing extremely, it will prevent you from being pulverised; invigorate your self therefore, and bring us as much good health as you possibly can.

LETTER 453

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Tuesday evening, September 8, 1676.

I sleep at Paris, my dear child. I came here this morning to dine with Madame de Villars, and to take my leave of her; it is no longer a thing to jest about, she goes away in good earnest on Thursday; and though she is very desirous to hear the three pretty words you have to say to her, she will not wait for you. She will not even wait

the disposal of the lieutenancy of Languedoc, though common report says, she has so great an interest in it. She is going in quest of her husband, and is to personate him at a foreign Court. Madame de Saint-Géran [1] seems overwhelmed with grief at this separation; she stays behind with no attendant, but her virtue, and no support, but her good name. Half the world thinks it will not be difficult to comfort her; for my part, I think she regrets sincerely the loss of so sweet and so agreeable a companion. Madame de Villars has asked me to make you a thousand compliments: I regret this family exceedingly. Madame de Coulanges was with me; she will return to Livry as soon as she has been at Châville, where she has business. I am not in the least uneasy at her stay at Livry, complaisance has no pretensions to any share in it; she is in raptures with the place, and is the most agreeable companion in the universe. You may well imagine we pass but few dull moments. Corbinelli is often with us; so are Brancas and Coulanges, besides a world of comers and goers. Whom should we meet the other day at the end of the little bridge, but the Abbé de Grignan and the Abbé de St. Luc! I return to my forest to-morrow morning early. Corbinelli thinks my little physician a very great adept: the good man's powders have done me much good; I am going to take a small pill every morning for some days, in order to remove the serosities which gathered last year in my poor body, for which they are a sovereign specific: afterwards I shall bathe my hands in the vintage, without intermission, till they are perfectly cured, or till they tell me they are resolved never to be cured. In other respects, I am in perfect health, and my excursions to Paris are rather an amusement than a fatigue to me. I take care never to expose myself to the night dews; and as for her ladyship, the moon, I shut my eyes as often as I pass by the garden, in order to exclude the temptation *del demonio* (of the demon). In a word, you have thoroughly con-

[1] Françoise-Madeleine-Claude de Warignies, Comtesse de Saint-Géran.

vinced me that my health is one of your chief concerns; this thought makes me particularly careful to manage it as a thing you hold dear, and for which I am responsible to you: you may be assured I shall give you a very good account of it. My son informs me that the brothers de Ripert have performed prodigies of valour in the defence of Maëstricht; I congratulate the dean, as well as M. de Ripert, upon this occasion.

Wednesday morning.

I have not slept well, but I am in good health, and am returning to my forest in the hope and impatience of seeing you; these are the two standing topics, you know, of my letters, or rather, of my reveries; for I am sensible I ought to keep this in a great measure to myself, and not trouble others with the subject of my musings.

LETTER 454

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Friday, September 11, 1676.

You are extremely witty, on the subject of our Coadjutor. It seems you have resumed the liberties we took the year I was at Grignan; how we roasted him on the stories M. de Grignan told, that the Coadjutor might go boldly anywhere without fear of the gabelle! I do not think there ever was a person of a happier turn for raillery than he is, not even M. de V*** [1], who, if we may believe Madame Cornuel [2], has placed a good porter at his door; that is, given his wife a sad disorder. The other day a very decrepit, frightful old woman presented herself before the King at dinner. The Prince pushed her back, and asked her what she wanted: "Sir," said she, "I would fain have prayed His Majesty to have obtained leave for me to speak

[1] M. le Duc de Ventadour.

[2] Madame Cornuel was famous for her *bon-mots*.

with M. de Louvois." The King said to her, "Apply to M. de Rheims; he can do it much better than I can [1]." Every one present was delighted with this answer. Nanteuil [2], on the other hand, begged His Majesty would be pleased to command M. de Calvo to sit for his portrait. He is forming a cabinet, in which it seems he intends to give him a place. Everything you foresaw with respect to Maëstricht, has happened like the accomplishment of a prophecy. The King gave M. de Roquelaure yesterday the government of Guyenne: this is long expectation well recompensed at last.

It is the general opinion that *Quanto's* star begins to wane. There is nothing now but tears, vexations, disappointments, and affected gaiety; in short, my child, everything has an end. Everyone is now upon the watch, observing, conjecturing, divining; and faces are thought to shine like stars of the first magnitude, that, but a month ago, were deemed unworthy to be compared with some others: but the cards go merrily on, whilst the fair one confines herself to her own apartment. Some tremble with fear, others laugh; some wish the continuance of things on their present footing, others long for a new scene; in short, this is a crisis worthy of attention; at least if we may give credit to those who affect to be the deepest in the secret. Little Rochefort [3] is to be married immediately to her cousin de Nangis; she is twelve years old. If she has a child soon, the Chancellor's lady may say, "Daughter, go tell your daughter, that her daughter's daughter is crying." Madame de Rochefort [4] has taken refuge in a convent while this match is making, and appears still inconsolable.

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[1] There is another account of this episode. It is said, that it was to Madame Dufrênoi, the Minister's mistress, that the King sent this old woman; which was more humorous, though less delicate.

[2] Famous for portraits in pastel, and a celebrated engraver.

[3] She was great-grand-daughter of the Chancellor de Séguier's lady.

[4] Madeleine de Laval-Bois-Dauphin, widow of Maréchal de Rochefort, who died 22nd May, 1676.

LETTER 454[A]

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Monday, September 14, 1676.

You know I returned here on Wednesday morning: I am delighted to be alone; I walk out, I amuse myself with reading and work, and I go to church; in short, I ask pardon of the company I expect, but I own, I do wondrous well without them. My Abbé remained at Paris, that he might talk to your Abbé, and desire him to give M. Colbert the letter M. de Grignan wrote him before he set out. Had the Abbé Têtu been here, I should have been glad of his company in the absence of the Abbé de Grignan, but he, it seems, is in Touraine: it is true, he likes there should be neither master nor companion in the families he honours with his friendship. Yet can you think it possible he should have one or other at our little friend's [1]? I tell him every day, that his regard for her must needs be very great, since he makes her *swallow snakes* both summer and winter; for, in my opinion, the dog-days are as disagreeable as the carnival: thus, the whole year is but one continual penance. They pretend to say that the *friend's friend* [2] is no longer what she has been; so that we must not calculate upon a strong head, since it could not support the hurricane of this good country. Yours is a wonderful one indeed to endure your north-east winds with so much patience, and even good humour. When you are in good spirits, which I can easily discover by your letters, I share your cheerfulness: you are apprehensive you sometimes say silly things to me; good heavens! it is I who should make that complaint, who am constantly committing the fault, and who ought to blush at it, when I think how much my years surpass yours, and how much younger I am in

[1] Madame de Coulanges.

[2] Madame de Maintenon.

understanding. It is true, I should never have suspected you of calling La Garde *your ace of hearts*; it was a charming fancy; but it almost kills me to think that, after all, it may be a sort of presage of his being soon called by that pleasing title, *bon jeu, bon argent.* I hope you will acquaint me with all the particulars of that long-expected wedding. I am astonished he should have retained this whim so long in his head: it is a strange prospect for one, who could have done so well without it. When you mention any follies of this kind, I fancy you are thinking of me. We laughed very heartily at Grignan. You give me an excellent picture of La Vergne; I long to see him; I have scarcely ever heard so many praises of one man. Did I inform you that Penautier takes the air sometimes in his prison? He sees all his relations and friends, and passes his time in wondering at the injustice of the world: we wonder at it as much as he can do.

Madame de Coulanges informs me, she is grieved that she cannot return for these four or five days; that she is obliged to go about a Controllership, which she hears is vacant; that she is to wait on the King, and what is worse, on M. Colbert; I advised her to desire the King, as the old woman did, to procure her an audience of M. Colbert; I told her, at the same time, to make use of her eyes and ears, when she is in that part of the world, and to be sure not to lose the use of her tongue, when she comes here. She informs me, as the rest do, that Madame de Soubise has set out for Lorges; this journey does great honour to her virtue. It is said there has been a thorough reconciliation, perhaps too good a one. Maréchal d'Albret has left Madame de Rohan a hundred thousand francs, this methinks savours strongly of restitution. My son tells me, that the enemy were for a considerable while very near us; that on M. de Schomberg's approach, they retired; that on his nearer approach, they retired still farther: in short, that they are now at the distance of six leagues, and will be soon at the distance of twelve; never was there so good-natured an enemy, *I love them dearly*; a pretty

way of abusing words truly; for I have no other way of telling you I love you, but that I make use of for our enemies.

LETTER 455

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Wednesday, September 16, 1676.

What are you thinking of, my dear child, or what can you imagine, by saying you are uneasy at my taking my honest man's powders? They have really been of infinite service to me; and in four hours after I have taken them, I feel no inconvenience from them. This dreadful remedy, which has so terrified the rest of the world, is grown so tame and so gentle with me, and we have become so well acquainted in Brittany, that we are continually exchanging new proofs of mutual confidence and esteem; the powder by its good effects, and I by words; but all is founded on gratitude. Be not uneasy respecting my stay at Livry; I find myself in perfect health; I live as I like, walk a great deal, read, have no sort of employment, and without setting up for one who loves to be an idler, nobody can possibly be fonder of the *far niente* (doing nothing) of the Italians than I am. I should never have been prevailed upon to quit this place for Paris, were it not for reasons which seem to me superior to inclination: and could I dispense with these without remorse I should travel as slowly as Madame de La Fayette herself. I never expose myself to the evening air, and suffer Madame de Coulanges to walk by herself; Corbinelli stays at home very cheerfully to entertain me; for you must know he is much more delicate than I am. Amonio makes me take a pill that is highly recommended, and a decoction of betony, every morning; it clears the head delightfully, and is the very thing I wanted: I shall continue it for a week, and then for the vintage. In short, I think of nothing but my health:

this is what is called eating sugar with sweetmeats. Pray, therefore, be not uneasy upon my account, and think only of administering the sovereign, and indeed the last, remedy you promised me, your delightful company. Everybody is dying at *The Rocks,* and at Vitré, of a dysentery and purple fever. Two of my workmen have lost their lives by it; I trembled for Pilois: the millers, the farmers, everybody, has been attacked by these dreadful disorders. As you are above the wind, I hope you will escape these thick fogs; we are all well here; your notion of this place is not a just one. La Mousse is at Poitou, with Madame de Sanzei. It is true, he and Corbinelli are too much alike to amuse the spectators. Corbinelli thinks you as great a philosopher as Father Malebranche himself: you may humble yourself as you please, you will be exalted in spite of yourself. I am now reading the little Marquis's book; I have likewise M. d'Andilly's, which is admirable, the English Schism [1], which amuses me highly; and more than all these, the furious attacks upon each other, of Father Bouhours and Ménage [2], who tear one another's eyes out, to our great amusement. They not only rail at one another, but in the most abusive language: there are likewise some excellent remarks on the French language; you cannot imagine what entertainment this controversy affords us; I wonder the Jesuit should give himself such liberties as he does, since he has *our brethren* (de Port-Royal) among his hearers, who will all on a sudden relieve him from his post, and that at a time when he least thinks of it; the laugh seems to be chiefly against him. The Father Prior is an excellent companion, on such occasions. Ah, my child, how much you would have profited by

[1] This is the work of the Jesuit Sanderus, translated by Maucroix; a work full of partiality and fanaticism, which has been substantially refuted by Burnet. Neither the work nor the refutation are read, since this history has been written by philosophers.

[2] Thus Bouhours, who had been the first to attack, was the first to demand peace. Ménage relates, that in the visit he paid the Jesuit after their reconciliation, he accosted him with this phrase from Petronius, "The wound was deep, but it has left no scar." He added ingenuously; "Since we are friends, I find no more faults in his works."

Father Le Bossu[1], who was here yesterday! he is the most learned man of his age, and a consummate Jansenist[2], that is to say, Cartesian; he was pleased to lower his tone, however, on certain topics. I took great pleasure in hearing him talk; the Prior led him out very pleasantly; but I thought continually of you, and could not help considering myself as a person unworthy of a conversation by which you must have profited so much, and in which you would so admirably have sustained your part. Corbinelli worships this Father, and has been to visit him at Sainte-Geneviève; when he comes here again, I must contrive for them to meet. Madame de Coulanges is still at Versailles; the *worthy* is at Paris; I am alone here, and yet I am not alone, which vexes me: for I had rather be left quite to myself. M. and Madame de Mêmes are here; M. de Richelieu, Madame de Toisi, and a little girl who sings, came to dine with them the day before yesterday; I went there after dinner; we read a minute account of the siege of Maëstricht, which is indeed a very pretty affair; the brothers de Ripert are taken notice of in a very handsome manner. Madame de Soubise has gone away in no small pet, lest the very shadow of her spindle should give offence; a great culverin was fired when it was least expected, that alarmed the camp. I will tell you more of this, after I have seen the *sylph*.

Amonio gives me leave to stay here some time longer; the weather is yet too fine to drive me away, and I am going to set about curing my hands. I never say a word of Italian to him, and he never speaks a word of French to me; this pleases us both. There is great intriguing at Chelles upon his account. I fear he will never grow old there: it is a little insurrection. Madame supports him, the young nuns hate him, the old ones like him, the confessors are envious of him, the visitor finds fault with his

[1] René Le Bossu, regular canon of Sainte-Geneviève, author of an excellent treatise on *Epic Poetry*.

[2] This conformity between the terms Jansenist and Cartesian, relates to the *arrêt* of Despréaux in support of Aristotle's doctrine against reason. See this *arrêt* in Despréaux's works.

face: I could say a great deal of nonsense upon this subject.

But let us talk of Philisbourg; people now begin to think it will not be taken: it is only blockaded. The enemy's troops have decamped, in order to present their humble request to M. de Luxembourg to retire from Brisgaw[1], am I right? a Province is now laying waste, and which the Emperor values more than the conquest of Philisbourg. The King is fortunate in everything; and if I am apprehensive for my son, it is because private persons often suffer in public victories; but I neither am, nor ever can be, in any sort of apprehension for the vessel of the State. I am much more uneasy about that which brings our Cardinal's luggage, whose ill luck never fails to shipwreck everything: you have a stamp of it in your fortune, as well as a quarter in your arms. But I think too much and too often of your affairs: I adore the Archbishop for the trouble he takes about them; for still this is something; did no one attend to its safety, what would become of your bark? it is I who must be then at the helm. I sincerely wish Mazarques were sold, with the leave of Mademoiselle de Mazarques. I shall see what the Marquis de Livourne intends to do, it will be attended with no cost; and as to favours from His Majesty, we ought always to expect when we know we deserve them, as M. de Grignan certainly does. Look at M. de Roquelaure; what an example of patience! no courtier had greater cause of complaint than he had.

I would rather go to Provence to pay a visit to the Archbishop, than to see your Prior who cures all evils.

Ah, what a grudge I owe physicians! what mummery is their art! I heard an account yesterday of the *Malade Imaginaire*, which I have not seen; the hero of the piece is entirely under the management of these gentlemen, whose prescriptions he follows with the most scrupulous exactness. Sixteen drops of elixir are ordered in

[1] A country in Germany, situated between the Rhine and the Black Forest.

thirteen spoonfuls of water; should there be fourteen, he thinks it would destroy him. He takes a pill, and is told he must walk in his chamber; but he is presently reduced to a dreadful and most embarrassing difficulty, having forgotten whether he is to walk the length of his room, or the breadth of it. I could not help laughing heartily at this; and the same absurdities occur continually.

I am extremely anxious to hear of the arrival of the casket, and how you like it: how is it that this same marriage seems still so distant? God forgive me, but it appears very much like La Brinvilliers, who was eight months killing her father. Good heavens! burn this letter immediately; my compliments and respects to all the Grignans, and to our friends at Aix. I oblige Roquesante to appear ungrateful, by the great love and esteem I bear her.

LETTER 456

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Friday, September 18, 1676.

Poor Madame de Coulanges is in a violent fever, attended with shiverings. She was seized at Versailles; to-morrow is the fourth day; she has been bled, and is no better: she is at a place where they will certainly take every drop of blood from her body, rather than not cure her. Her lungs are very much affected, and I am still more so: it is impossible for me to recollect all she writes me about her distress at not returning here, without being greatly moved. I intend to see her to-morrow; but I must be here again on Sunday, to begin my vintage. You shall have reason to be satisfied with me for devoting so much time to the cure of my hands. Corbinelli has sent me the letter you wrote him; it is really one of the prettiest compositions I ever read: I will certainly show it to Father

Le Bossu[1], for he is my Malebranche[2]; he will be charmed with the good sense you display in it; he will answer you if he is able; for he is not one of those who supply the want of arguments, with the chaff of words. I am sure you will like the simplicity and clearness of his understanding; he is the nephew of the M. de La Lane, who had the handsome wife. Cardinal de Retz has told you a thousand times of her divine beauty. He is nephew of the great Abbé de La Lane, the Jansenist; the whole race inherit good sense, but he in an extraordinary manner; lastly, he is cousin of the little dancing La Lane. You see how I have entangled myself in particulars: all this was highly necessary no doubt.

The page of politics to Corbinelli is excellent: it may be understood without an interpreter; I shall therefore consult no one about it. Maréchal Schomberg has attacked the rear-guard of the enemy; he must wholly have defeated them, had he pursued with a more numerous body of troops; a party of forty dragoons sacrificed their lives like so many heroes; one of the name of d'Aigremont was killed on the spot; and Bussy's son, who wanted to get to Paradise in haste, is a prisoner; the Comte de Vaux is always among the foremost; the rest of the army was wholly unemployed; so that five hundred horse made all this havoc. It is said, that it is a pity this detachment had not been stronger; but I see it happen every moment, that the wisest is often deceived. Even the *worthy* has sometimes been out in his calculations; he embraces you with his whole heart; and I think a thousand times a day of the pleasure I shall have in seeing you.

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[1] See Letter 455, of 16th September, 1676, in this volume.

[2] Nicolas Malebranche, priest of the Oratory, author of the book called *Recherche de la Vérité*, and of several other works highly esteemed: he was one of the best writers, as well as one of the greatest philosophers, of his time.

*LETTER 457

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to the Comte* DE BUSSY.

Livry, September 18, 1676.

Every good dog comes from a good breed: you see, my dear cousin, what our little Rabutin is doing already. And so he is a prisoner. Is he not wounded? And how will you redeem him? Are the ransoms for officers of his rank fixed? By the way in which, I am informed, he pushed himself forwards, I suppose he was ambitious to take the enemy. I hope you will send me news of him, and of yourself, for I am much more interested about you than I say I am. How has the law-suit terminated, of which the account, contrary to custom, was so entertaining? How is my niece de Coligny, and her little boy? He must be a great comfort to her, and this idea gives me pleasure, because I rejoice in her happiness. Is Madame de Bussy as well as usual? Here are a number of questions for you. If you should be inclined to follow my example, and ask me as many, I will answer them beforehand. I am here, in this pretty place, which you are so well acquainted with; and much better, and more comfortable, it seems to me, than at Paris, at least, for a short time. I am using some remedies for the recovery of my health, and am putting my arms into the vintage tubs, hoping that my hands, which are not yet closed, will resume their ordinary functions. You ought to send me some scraps of your *Memoirs*. I know persons who have seen a part of them, who do not love you so much as I do, though they may have greater merit.

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*LETTER 458

From the Comte DE BUSSY *to Madame* DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, September 18, 1676.

I have heard, that the little Rabutin wished to take the Prince of Orange by the beard; but that he was so astonished when he found him without any, that he fell into a ditch, where he was taken prisoner. I send you his letter, which will inform you exactly how this affair happened. His horse or his ransom will cost me a hundred pistoles. But he has obtained more honour than money is worth. He is very fortunate in being the only one who has been taken prisoner, at least of persons of consequence. I have been under a course of medicine for a fortnight, which has prevented me from coming to see you. I do not, however, abandon the idea, and I wish to sleep at Livry. Send me word if the Abbé can give me a bed. I will bring the *Memoirs* and read them with you. I wish to know what passages particularly obtain your applause; and if you read them without me, you would only praise the work in general.

Your niece de Coligny, and the posthumous boy, are wonderfully well: she is pleased with him, and would not be displeased without him.

LETTER 459

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Monday, September 21, 1676.

No, my dear child, it is not because I want to save you the disagreeableness of a journey in the month of December, that I entreat you to come here in October; it is merely because I shall have the pleasure of seeing you

two months sooner. I have not taken upon me to use the power you gave me over you, by ordering you to come here this summer: you must therefore make amends for this piece of complaisance, and if you do not mean to carry your irresolution beyond all bounds, you will set out exactly as was agreed upon between us, that is, when M. de Grignan goes to his Assembly: this is the precise time from which I shall date my obligation to you, as I shall then consider you devoted to myself. My friendship tells me I ought to expect this from you, and now we will change the subject. As for my health, you need be under no sort of concern about it; I bathe my hands twice a day in the must of the vintage; my head is a little affected; but I am persuaded, from what everybody tells me, that I shall be benefited by it. Should I be mistaken, Vichy will then come upon the carpet; in the meanwhile, I do every thing I am bid, and walk up and down and across my room, with the most scrupulous obedience imaginable. I shall not protract my stay here beyond the fine weather; I am under no sort of necessity to do so, and therefore will not promise to wait for the fogs of October. Did I tell you Segrais [1] has married a very rich cousin of his? She refused alliance with persons of equal wealth with herself, alleging that they would certainly despise her, and that she preferred her cousin.

I would gladly know why you forbid me to write you long letters, since it is the most pleasing of all occupations, especially when I cannot have your company. You threaten me with returning them unopened. I should be exceedingly sorry to pay the postage; they are filled with such a multitude of trifles, that I am sometimes vexed to think, that even you should have to pay for them: but if you

[1] Jean Renaud de Segrais of the French Academy.

Que Segrais dans l'Eglogue enchante les forêts!

How Segrais in his Eclogues charms the forests!

[Translation.]

Notwithstanding this verse of Boileau's, his *Eclogues*, like his translation of *Virgil*, have long been without readers.

really desire to rid yourself of that mortification, come, come and see me, come and snatch the pen out of my hands, come and be my governess, and then upbraid me with the wretched things I have written you. This will be the best and the only way to prevent the swelling of my limbs, and, indeed, to restore me to the enjoyment of perfect health.

Philisbourg is taken at last, and I wonder at it. I did not think our enemies knew how to take a town; I therefore asked, in the first place, who it was that had taken it, and whether it was not ourselves; but no, it is really they.

LETTER 460

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, September 25, 1676.
At Madame de Coulanges's.

Indeed, my child, this poor little woman is very ill: this is the eleventh day of her illness, which seized her at Châville as she was returning from Versailles. Madame Le Tellier was seized with it at the same time, and returned immediately to Paris, where she received the viaticum yesterday. Beaujeu, Madame de Coulanges's waiting-maid, was struck by the same arrow: she has followed her mistress; not a medicine was prescribed for the one, that was not ordered, at the same time for the other; purgatives, bleeding, the sacrament, the paroxysms, the delirium, were exactly alike in both. God grant this fellowship may cease, for Beaujeu has just received extreme unction, and, it is thought, will hardly live till morning. We fear the return of the fit which Madame de Coulanges may have to-morrow, as hers and her maid's have been so similar. This it must be owned is a dreadful disorder: I have witnessed the terrible bleedings the physicians prescribe to the poor creatures who happen to be afflicted with

it; and as I am sensible that I have no veins, I declared yesterday to the first President of the Court of Aids, that if ever I am dangerously ill, I shall beg him to send M. Sanguin to me immediately; I am resolved on this. The very sight of those gentry is sufficient to deter us from putting our poor bodies in their power[1]. The death of Beaujeu is one of their back-handed exploits. I have thought of Molière a hundred times since I became a witness of those scenes. I am not without hope, however, that our friend may escape, notwithstanding their vile treatment of her. She is calm at present, and in a sort of slumber, that will give her strength for what may happen during the night.

I have seen Madame de Saint Géran, who is by no means low-spirited: her house will be a constant place of resort, where M. de Grignan will pass his evenings very lovingly. She is going to Versailles with the rest. I can assure you she intends to enjoy the fruits of her economy, and to live on the credit of the reputation she has acquired; it will be a considerable time before she has exhausted her stock. She sends you a thousand compliments; she is very fat, and very well. You tell me wonders of the friendship of Roquesante; I am by no means surprised at it, knowing his heart so well as I do. He merits, for many reasons, the distinction you show him. I am quite well, and am overjoyed I had not begun the vintage; I shall use the other remedies; and when this poor little woman is recovered, I shall rest myself for a few days, at Livry. Brancas came to-night on foot, on horseback, or in a cart; he fainted away at the side of the poor invalid's bed: no

[1] It was not long that the circulation of the blood, proved, if not discovered, by Harvey, had changed the practice of medicine. It gave birth to several systems. "Hence this rage for bleeding, which the partisans of Botal believed themselves more authorised than before, to have recourse to in the treatment of diseases; a rage, which, though so often wearied with systematic murders, only reposed at intervals, and occasionally burst forth again in the schools." It is thus the eloquent and luminous historian of the Revolutions of Medicine expresses himself. This is the picture of the epocha in which Madame de Sévigné wrote. Bleeding passed for a universal specific.

love can exceed his. That I entertain for you is far from being trivial.

I found at Paris an affair blown all over the town, which will appear extremely ridiculous to you; there are a thousand people who will tell you of it, but it seems as if you liked my accounts the best. There was a sort of agent of the King of Poland [1] at Court, who was buying up all the finest estates for his master. At length, he fixed upon that of Rieux in Brittany, for which he had signed a contract for five hundred thousand livres, requesting that this estate or manor might be erected into a Duchy, and the name left blank. He took care to have all sorts of fine privileges and rights annexed to it, male and female, as suited his fancy. The King, and indeed everybody else, thought it must be either for M. d'Arquien, or the Marquis de Béthune. This agent at length presented to His Majesty a letter from the King of Poland, naming the person it was for, guess who? Brisacier, son of the *Maître des comptes.* He had pushed himself into notice by a numerous retinue, and the most ridiculous expenses. The world simply took him for a fool, which is no rarity. But the King of Poland, by I do not know what divination, found out that Brisacier was originally from Poland; by which his name was lengthened by an additional *ski,* and himself became a Pole. The King of Poland adds, that Brisacier is his relation, and that formerly when in France, he was going to marry his sister. He has sent his mother a golden key; as Lady of Honour to the Queen. Slander, by way of amusement, gave out that the King of Poland, also by way of amusement, had had some slight inclination for the mother, and that this boy was his son; but the affair is not so for all that; the chimera rests wholly on the good House of Poland. The little agent, however, has blown the whole affair, thinking the business he came upon as good as concluded; and the King, as soon as he was informed of the truth, treated this agent as an insolent fellow and a fool, and ordered him to leave Paris, giv-

[1] Jean Sobieski.

ing him to understand, that, had it not been for his regard for the King of Poland, he would have him sent to the Bastille. His Majesty has written to the King of Poland, complaining, in a friendly manner, of this intended profanation of the highest honour of the kingdom; and considers the protection the King of Poland is said to give this diminutive creature, as an imposition, and even calls in question the legality of the character with which he pretends to be invested. He leaves it to M. de Pomponne to enlarge upon this fertile subject. It is said this little agent has made off; so that the affair will probably sleep till the return of the courier.

LETTER 461

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, September 30, 1676.

I am telling a fib, it is only Tuesday: but I begin my letter in answer to yours, and that I may talk to you about Madame de Coulanges, and shall finish it to-morrow, which will in reality be Wednesday.

It is now the fourteenth day of our friend's illness; the physicians will not as yet take upon them to promise anything, because the fever still continues, and from her constant delirium, they have reason to be afraid of her losing her senses. However, as the returns are weaker, we hope all will still be well. They attempted to give her an emetic this morning, but found her reason so far gone, that it was impossible to prevail on her to take enough, to have the desired effect. It seems to me, as if you took pleasure in making yourself uneasy about my continuing in the feverish air of this house; I assure you I am as well, as you could wish me to be. M. de Coulanges is extremely desirous I should be here. I am sometimes in the chamber of the invalid, sometimes in the garden; I come and go

when I please, I chat with a multitude of people; I walk out continually, so that I am in no danger of catching the fever: in short, my child, you need be under no uneasiness respecting me.

Poor Amonio is no longer at Chelles; he was obliged to yield to the visitor; Madame [1] is highly nettled at this affront, and in order to be revenged, has shut up all the avenues to her house; so that my sister de Biron, my sister de La Meilleraie, my nieces de Biron, my sister-in-law de Cossé, friends, cousins, neighbours, and everybody else, are refused access. All the parlours are shut up, all the fish days are observed, the matins are sung without the miséricorde; a thousand little relaxations of discipline are reformed; and when any complaint is made, "Alas! I must keep to the rules."—"But you were not always so severe."—"I was wrong for not being so, I heartily repent it." In fact, we may call Amonio the reformer of Chelles. This trifle will no doubt amuse you; and you may say what nonsense you please on the subject, I am persuaded of Madame's wisdom; though it is this very circumstance that renders the affair utterly inconceivable. Amonio is with M. de Nevers; he is dressed like a Prince, and is the best creature in the world. He has sat up five or six nights with Madame de Coulanges; I assure you he is as great an adept as any of them, but his beard is not fit to appear in the presence of M. Brayer's. They have all told me that the vintage this year would certainly have done me harm, and that my being dissuaded from it, was a very fortunate circumstance. You will ask me, who recommended it to me? I answer, Everybody, and Vesou as well as the rest; but he has thought better of it, and I am not sorry that he has done so.

Everyone is of opinion that the lover's passion is at an end, and that *Quanto* is embarrassed between the consequences which might follow the return of favours, and the danger of discontinuing them, lest they should be sought after in some other quarter: on the other hand,

[1] Marguerite-Guyonne de Cossé, Abbess of Chelles.

it will be wrong to imagine friendship alone will content her; so much beauty, and so much pride, are not easily reduced to the second place. Jealousy, it is true, is extremely quick-sighted; but did you ever know that restless passion prevent anything? It is certain looks have passed between him and the *good*[1] *woman*; but even granting all you have said to be perfectly just, she is still a different person, and that you know alters the case prodigiously. Many are of opinion she is too well advised, to display the standard of such perfidy, with so small an appearance of enjoying it long; she would then be directly exposed to the fury of *Quanto*; would open the way to infidelity, and would serve as a thoroughfare to others, who are younger, and more desirable; in the meantime everybody is on the watch, and it is thought time will make some discoveries. The *good woman* has asked leave of absence for her husband; and since his return appears in her dress, and in all respects, as she used to do.

Did I tell you that the good Marquise d'Uxelles has the small-pox? It is thought, however, she will get the better of this dreadful disease, which is no small miracle at her age and mine.

It is now Wednesday evening. The poor patient is out of danger; unless some accident happens, which it is impossible to foresee. Beaujeu was actually gone, but the emetic raised her from the dead; it is not so easy to die as some people imagine.

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[1] This is undoubtedly Madame de Soubise, whose intrigue with the King was so secret, and conducted with so much art, that the penetrating malice of the courtiers and mistresses, could never do more than suspect it.

LETTER 462

From the Abbé DE PONTCARRÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, October 2, 1676.

According to my old and laudable custom, I came this morning into the apartment of the Marquise: the moment she saw my merry face, she guessed my intentions, and gave me this sheet of paper; but her generosity was not quite so great as it seemed to be, for she intends to make use of a part of it for herself, which I agree to willingly. I will therefore tell you *in poche parole* (in few words), my lady Comtesse, that we are still in the dark as to the rest of the campaign. Will M. de Lorraine remain [1] for ever with folded arms? *Ecco il punto* (this is the point). We are also in qualms about M. de Zell's march towards the Moselle. M. de Schomberg must have passed the Sambre on the twenty-seventh, in his march towards Philippeville: it will be easy for him to send reinforcements to M. le Maréchal de Créqui.

I suppose you know all the cabals of the Conclave; if your friend should arrive at the sovereign eminence, methinks it would be no bad thing for you to take a trip to Rome, to offer him your service; you will have time enough, if it be true that the election is not to take place immediately. I passed part of yesterday at Richelieu's; I found the ladies entirely engrossed with deciding the important question of dress; I can only tell you that the *angel* will be most superb. I grumbled as usual, but received no other satisfaction than that of being treated as an old fool and a buffoon. I took all in good part, as I found myself not at all the worse for it. They wanted to talk to me about borrowing some jewels; but I did not encourage the idea, having always condemned such liberties.

[1] Prince Charles of Lorraine had just taken Philisbourg, after a siege of twenty-four days.

We are to have Madame de Verneuil with us on Monday: she is coming to prepare for her journey into Languedoc. Manierosa is to accompany her, and to stay some days with us, after which she sets out for the Loire. I am, Madame, with all due respect, wholly yours.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *continues this letter to her Daughter.*

You know the fat Abbé, and how glad he is to save his paper; fortunately I am still better pleased, to furnish him with what he wants. He is at present sadly cast down at an accident that has happened to him: you must know he has given his valet a cloak, which he had worn only a year, thinking he had worn it two years: this mistake is grievous, and he is very sensible upon the subject: for my part, I think him as much an original in economy, as the Abbé de La Victoire is in avarice.

Madame de Castries [1] sends me word that Odescalchi is Pope; you must have known it before it could reach us. Our Cardinals are now returning: should they come by way of Provence, you will see them before you set out. Do you know that little Amonio is travelling post to Rome? His uncle, not the one who attended the deceased Pope [2], is groom of the bed-chamber to the new Pope [3]. Thus his fortune is made, and he will no longer stand in need of the favours of Madame de Chelles, or any of her nuns. It is now Friday, my child, and I should by this time have been at Livry, as the weather is so delightfully fine, and Madame de Coulanges out of danger, enjoying the pleasure of her recovery; but I wish first to know whether M. de Pomponne has concluded our affair this morning, that I may send you his letter this evening. I want likewise to thank him, and to speak to Parère; after which I shall be easy, and shall go to-morrow, or Sunday, to Livry.

[1] Elisabeth de Bonzi, sister of the Cardinal of that name.

[2] Clement X.

[3] Odescalchi, elected Pope the 21st September, took the name of Innocent XI.

Madame de Maintenon came yesterday to see Madame de Coulanges; she expressed great concern at her sufferings, and was overjoyed at her recovery, or rather resurrection. The lovers were together all day yesterday. The wife came to Paris. They dined together: there was no card-playing in public. In short, joy is now returned, and every appearance of jealousy vanished. As there are nothing but changes in this world, from one extreme to another, the great woman is returned by water, and is now as well with the *beauty,* as she was formerly ill with her. Their rancour is softened; in short, what they say to-day, they unsay to-morrow: this is by no means the region of immutability. I conjure you, my beloved child, not to imitate these personages with regard to your journey, and to consider that we are now arrived at the second of October. As for my health, be under no concern about it: Livry, whatever you may think, will do me infinite service during the fine weather. Say nothing to T****, I beseech you; though I love him for his willingness to oblige you *in ogni modo* (in every way), by telling you he saw me; this little lie proceeded from a good motive. I assure you, my beauty, I never set my eyes on him, and did not so much as know of his being in Paris. Langlade had like to have died at Frêne of the same complaint as Madame de Coulanges, with this exception, that he was still worse than our friend, and had received extreme unction. Madame Le Tellier will pay for all; she is extremely ill. Farewell, my dear Comtesse: I embrace the Comte and the pretty *pigeons.* My God, how dear you all are to me! I entreat you to read Father Bossu: he has composed a small *Treatise on the Art of Poetry,* which Corbinelli rates a hundred times higher than that of Despréaux [1].

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[1] There seems to be no sort of comparison between the two works. The first, which is in prose, is a diffuse treatise on the epic poem in particular; and the other, which is in verse, comprehends the art of poetry in general, but in a very concise manner, and in imitation of Horace's *Art of Poetry*; so that Father Le Bossu's work may be es-

LETTER 463

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Wednesday, October 7, 1676.

I write to you now as it were *à l'avance,* as they say in Provence, to let you know that I returned here on Sunday, in order to finish the fine weather, and rest myself after my fatigue. I find myself in excellent health, and the solitary life I lead, is far from being disagreeable to me, especially as I know it will not last long. I am going to try some little remedies for my hands, purely out of complaisance to you, for, to tell you the truth, I have no great faith in them; and it is always with the view of pleasing you, that I take care of myself at all, being persuaded, that no human art can advance or retard the hour of my death for a single moment: yet for all that, I follow the plain maxims of what is called human prudence, believing, that by this, the eternal and immutable decrees of Providence are fulfilled. You may therefore conclude, my dear child, that no attention will be wanting on my part, as I hold this to be a necessary duty. This is a grave epistle: but I resume the sequel of my proceedings during my stay at Paris, which was nearly a fortnight. You know how I spent the Friday, and how I waited on M. de Pomponne. D'Hacqueville and I were of opinion that you had reason to be satisfied with the regulation that has been made, since the King wishes the Lieutenant to be treated with the same honours as the Governor: a very important point. On the Saturday, M. and Madame de Pomponne, Madame de Vins, d'Hacqueville, and the Abbé de Feuquières, came to take me with them on a jaunt to Conflans. The weather was extremely pleasant, and we found the

teemed and praised with great justice, without, however, giving it the preference to the work of Despréaux, which is a master-piece of didactic poetry.

house much improved since M. de Richelieu's time. There are six admirable fountains, which are supplied by machines from the river, and which will never be dry whilst the river has a drop of water in it. It is a pleasure to think of this supply of water, whether for bathing, or other purposes. M. de Pomponne was extremely cheerful and good-humoured; we had a great deal of conversation, and laughed the whole day from morning till night. With his natural sagacity, he found in everything a *cathedral-like air* [1]. We were a very happy little party, and you may be assured, you were not forgotten.

The vision of the *good woman* vanishes perceptibly; though she is not of opinion that fear is the sole motive of attachment to *Quanto*. As for M. de Marsillac's journey, I would not have you think it the effect of stratagem or finesse, it was very short, and he is now as well with the King as ever; he never once stopped for amusement, nor went a single step out of his way; he took Gourville with him, who has seldom much time to spare, and walked him round his estate like some great river, which enriches the soil wherever it flows. M. de La Rochefoucauld went, with the fondness of a child, to see Verteuil once more, and the places where he used formerly to hunt with so much pleasure; I cannot say the scenes of his love, for I do not believe he ever knew what love meant. He returns with a slower pace than his son, and is going into Touraine to pay a visit to Madame de Valentiné, and the Abbé d'Effiat. He was extremely anxious about Madame de Coulanges, who is now recovering from one of the most dangerous illnesses that it is possible to have endured. Neither the fever nor the fits have yet entirely left her; but as the crisis is past, and she is no longer subject to delirium, she may consider herself as being on the high road of convalescence. Madame de La Fayette is now at St. Maur. I have been there but once yet: she is still affected with the pain in her side, which has prevented her from seeing Madame de Coulanges, about whom she was exceedingly uneasy: the

[1] This house belongs to the Archbishops of Paris.

same reason prevented her visiting Langlade, who was dangerously ill of the same complaint, and had received extreme unction, which was even a step beyond our friend. In short, she is now better in every respect, and that without stirring from the spot where she was first taken ill. I told Madame de Coulanges the other day that Beaujeu had had extreme unction administered to her, and the *Jesus Maria* performed. She answered me with a voice, which sounded as if it came from the other world: "Ah! why did they not perform it for me? I am sure I deserved it as much as she did." What say you to this strange kind of ambition? I would have you write to little Coulanges; he deserves compassion; had he lost his wife, he would really have lost his all. I could not help being affected at her causing a letter to be written to M. du Gué [1], to recommend M. de Coulanges to him, and that from motives of justice and conviction, acknowledging that she had ruined him, and requesting this favour of M. and Madame du Gué, as the last testimony of their friendship: she asked their pardon and blessing at the same time. I assure you it was a very melancholy scene. You will therefore write to this poor little man, who seems gratified at the marks of friendship I have showed his wife: in truth, it is on such occasions as these that we ought to show it.

Your little German is extremely clever in the estimation of the good Abbé: he is as beautiful as an angel, and at the same time as modest and prudent as a young girl. He is going to repeat his German at M. de Strasbourg's. I have entreated him to render himself worthy of this honour: but I defy you to guess his name: to whatever you say, I may answer, "It is otherwise;" for "otherwise" (*Autrement*) is the name. Is it not calculated to excite in the mind a spirit of contradiction?

Madame Cornuel went the other day to visit Berryer, by whom she was very ill treated: she had to wait, till she could speak to him, in an ante-chamber full of servants. A civil sort of man came to her, and said that room was

[1] Madame de Coulanges's father, who was Controller of Lyons.

not a fit place for her: "Oh Sir," said she, "I am very well here: I do not mind the servants, so long as they behave themselves as such." This made M. de Pomponne burst into one of his hearty laughs, which you have so often heard: I think you also will be highly amused at it.

The Cardinal writes me word that he had created a Pope on the day before, and assures me, that he had no scruple in doing so. You know in what manner he eluded the sacrilege of a false oath: the rest must have enjoyed it highly, since it was not even necessary. He tells me that His Holiness is less a Pope in title, than in his life and conversation; that he wrote to you from Lyons as he went, and shall not have it in his power to see you as he returns, on account of these same galleys, at which he is exceedingly vexed: so that he will soon be at home again, as if nothing had happened. This journey has done him great honour; for nothing can exceed the propriety of his conduct. It is even the general opinion, that by the excellent choice he has made of a sovereign Pontiff, he has brought the Holy Spirit again into the Conclave, after an exile of many years: after such an example as this, there is no exile who may not have hope.

So you are now in solitude: this is the time for you to be afraid of ghosts. I would wager, that there are not above a hundred persons in your house. I am quite of your opinion as to the amiableness of the beautiful Rochebonne: but Corbinelli's constancy is immersed in such a sea of philosophy, and is so attached to syllogisms and argument, that I can no longer answer for him. He says, that Father Le Bossu does not reply properly to your questions; that it would be folly in him to pretend to instruct you, and that you know more of the matter than all of them: you will send us your opinion.

I think I told you the history of Brisacier[1]: it is impossible to say anything further of it till the return of the courier from Poland. He no longer appears, however, in

[1] This affair is related in detail in the *Mémoires de l'Abbé de Choisy.*

Paris, or at Court; he may be said properly to besiege the town, since he lives entirely among his friends in the environs. He was at Clichy the other day; Madame du Plessis came from Frêne to condole with him on the breaking off of his bargain: Brisacier assured her it was not broken off, and that as soon as the courier returned, the world would see whether he was the fool they thought him or not. Whether it be the King or the Queen of Poland, who is his protector, we shall judge of the affair as you do.

M. de Bussy came in while I was writing this letter: I showed him how mindful you were of him, he will tell you himself how much he is obliged to you. He read to me some of the most entertaining *Memoirs* in the world: they are not to be printed, though I am sure they deserve it more than half the things that are published.

We have this moment heard that Brisacier and his mother, who were near Gagny, have been apprehended: this is a bad omen, if true, with respect to the affair of the Dukedom. The news is perhaps rather too fresh, and possibly premature, at least in the way it is handed about in Paris. But d'Hacqueville will not fail to inform you of the particulars.

I have now, my child, yours of the thirtieth. Is it possible that you have not received mine of the twenty-first? it was filled with the finest exhortations imaginable; I decided the affair of your departure, and conjured you by your love, not to delay it a moment; this I now entreat you to do, for the same reasons: you will follow this advice, if you have the regard for me, I believe you to have; and in this persuasion, I shall wave saying again how much I desire it, and how much six weeks must necessarily add to my impatience. Madame de Soubise is gone to Flanders to see her husband, who is ill; I approve of this exceedingly: see the *Holland Gazette*. I embrace you a thousand times, my dearest child, with an affection I cannot express.

LETTER 464

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Friday, October 9, 1676.

I am sorry, my love, that the post should have delayed my letters. I know the regard you have for me, and how anxious you are about me; but it is only to apply to the great d'Hacqueville, when I am sure of all the assistance I can possibly desire. I shall never forget, while I live, the pleasure and consolation I enjoyed at *The Rocks*, from one of his letters, when you had just lain-in; and I may safely say, that had it not been for that letter, I should never have been able to support the grief I then endured. I persuade myself you will have reason to be satisfied by to-morrow, unless Madame de Bagnol's lacquey, of whose care I am not without some little apprehension, has thrown my letter aside. You will have seen in it, if it be come to hand, my answer to yours, wherein you wish me to wait the arrival of M. de Grignan. I desired you not to think of such a thing; I told you that it was not because the season was less advanced, that I wished you to come before M. de Grignan, but entirely on account of my extreme desire to see you, which made me conjure you to favour me with this small advance of pleasure, which I might very well claim, from my singular moderation, in not insisting upon your quitting your château till M. de Grignan should set out for the Assembly of the States; that I had laid my account with having you every moment of the time you gave me a right to expect; and that, in short, I conjured you, as I now do again, to think seriously of setting out this month, according to the agreement we had made. I flatter myself M. de Grignan will find nothing unjust in this. I have sent you the sum you will have occasion for till his arrival: I think you had better travel in a litter as far as Rouane, and then take water

to Briare, where my carriage will meet you. This, my child, is what is most material in my letter, in case, as is likely enough, it should be lost.

The Abbé Bayard informs me, that I did extremely well in not going to Vichy this season; that the continual rains have almost entirely spoiled the waters; that Saint-Hérem and Planci, who went there on purpose, did not use them; that the only person who took them, was M. de Champlâtreux, who was by no means satisfied with their effects: in short, his letter has afforded me infinite satisfaction; I was at a loss how to account for my own obstinacy, and find this to have been the very thing that caused it. I am now using a kind of mess for my hands, composed of deer's marrow, and Hungary-water, which, according to some, is to perform miracles. But what has really done me a great deal of service, is the remarkably fine weather we have had; those crystal days of autumn, when it is neither hot nor cold: in a word, I am quite transported with them; I walk from ten in the morning till five in the afternoon, without losing a minute; I then retire to my apartment with the most perfect submission; though it is not without considerable mortification, finding by this, to my no small regret, what a weak mortal I am, whom a foolish timidity forces to break with my charming evenings, the oldest friends I have in the world, and whom, perhaps, I accuse very unjustly of being the authors of all my ailments. I then fling myself into the church, where I remain without once lifting up my eye-lids, till they come to tell me there are lights in my apartment. I must have the degree of obscurity which the church or the woods afford, or else three or four people to chat with in the twilight: in a word, I follow your prescriptions with scrupulous exactness.

The news about Brisacier is confirmed; it has been discovered by his letters to the King of Poland, that he endeavoured to cause a rupture between him and our monarch; so he is now in the Bastille, and his fate hangs in the scales, suspended betwixt the gallows and a Dukedom.

There is much to be said on the subject of Germany. The General has met with a slight mortification again respecting the escorting of a convoy; he has been under the necessity to draw nearer to us, while these brutal Germans, as soon as he has recrossed the Rhine, will lay siege to Brisach, as they did last year to Philisbourg. It would be unpleasant enough were this to happen. There is great dissension in the army, I mean that of M. de Luxembourg. I have just received a note from d'Hacqueville, who was at Versailles on Wednesday, to expedite the regulation for the Assembly. I must acknowledge there never was such a friend as he is. The moment you have recommended any business to his care, he is so diligent and punctual in executing it, that one would often be tempted to think he had nothing in the world besides to attend to.

LETTER 465

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Begun at Livry and finished at Paris.
Wednesday, October 14, 1676.

I thank you for your complaisance, and for the regard you prove for me in the resolution you have adopted, of setting out before M. de Grignan. I embrace, and thank him too, for his goodness in consenting to it. I am at no loss to know what he suffers from your absence, but it is for so short a time, that he ought not to grudge me this pleasure: his share of your company is always greater than mine. I now earnestly recommend you to provide a good guide for your journey; it grieves me to think of the irksomeness it will be attended with; I would consign you to the care of Montgobert: take books with you; and, for heaven's sake, caution your muleteers against taking any short cuts, on the way from your house to Montélimart; let them keep the carriage-road. They brought Madame de Coulanges the way I have cautioned

you against, and but for du But, who alighted in an instant, and supported the litter, she would have fallen over a frightful precipice; she has told me this adventure ten times, which has almost terrified me to death. I have been awakened several times in the night, with the fear, lest they should bring you by this terrifying way. I conjure you, my dearest, to give this charge to some one who will have more care about you than yourself. I shall write to a M. Le Châtelain at Moulins, who will render you a great many little attentions; he is a very worthy, and very civil man, with a great deal of good sense, and some piety. You will see M. de Gamaches there too, a lady of the family of Montmorin, a lively and a pretty woman. She was my constant companion both the times I was at Moulins, or at the Mesdames Fouquet, without once leaving me, though I was there in all four or five days. In short, she is my best friend at Moulins.

M. de Seignelai has gone post to Marseilles about some affair which concerns the marine, though we know not what it is. Brisacier and his mother are still in the Bastille. The mother has obtained leave to have a woman to wait on her; but His Grace is obliged to be his own valet.

Your philosophical physician shoots from too great a distance to hit; he thought me ill, when I am perfectly recovered; and I can assure you, the advice they gave me here, was diametrically opposite to his. I shall conclude my letter to-morrow at Paris.

Thursday, 15.

I am now in Paris. I slept at Saint-Maur, where I went from Livry. I saw M. de La Rochefoucauld, and we had a long chat together. Had *Quanto* pursued a different line of conduct from what she did the year she returned to Paris, she would not have felt the mortification she now endures; it would have been a proof of good sense had she done so: but how great is human weakness! we

wish to husband our last remains of beauty; and this economy often ruins more than it enriches. The *little good lady* is still in Flanders; this serves to stop some folks' mouths. I have discovered, that my reveries at Livry have a wonderful conformity with people's conjectures here. I have not yet seen Madame de Coulanges; I shall not go there till I have sealed this packet. They tell me she is perfectly recovered, and that epigrams are beginning to dawn again. I shall present your compliments to her, and, at the same time, deliver your letter to her husband.

It is said, that Brisacier's crime is an abuse of his office, by forging a letter from our Queen to the King of Poland, requesting him to ask of our King the title of Duc for her secretary. This news must have been brought by the Polish courier, and the secretary is to be tried. You know what it is to abuse the seal and confidence of a Queen of France. *The Duc de Brisacierski,* I fear, will be hanged.

I foresee my son will return, instead of going to the Meuse, where his evil genius seems to have sent him: he has got the rheumatism in his hip, which will be an excellent thing to procure him leave of absence. If the fine weather continue any longer, I shall go for a short time to Livry. My house is quite ready for me, and everything in order, which is a main point. Pray write to me about your setting out, and I will write to you on Friday in return, about your mode of travelling from Briare or from Orléans. You are in the right when you say, that Amonio will amuse himself at Rome, with the adventure of the Reformation of Chelles, of which he was the author: I told you his uncle is lord of the bed-chamber to the new Pope: you have written me as much concerning this affair, as will furnish matter for a dozen epigrams. You are the oddest creature in the world, with all your wisdom and gravity; and would you take care of my spleen, I really think I should be immortal; they tell me all my evil springs from that. Think, my dearest, of coming to see me; I cannot wait calmly for the transporting pleasure of embracing you; no, my spirits are all on wing to meet you.

Adieu; I shall write to you on Friday. I have not seen a soul yet; you know how I love to collect scraps for your amusement. One thing I can never inform you of, which is, the extreme affection I bear you.

LETTER 466

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Friday, October 16, 1676.

Really, my dear child, I never saw such idiots as my own children are; they prevent me from returning to Livry as I intended. I see you are going to laugh at this, and that you are far from pitying me for being obliged to break my engagement with Livry on the fifteenth of October.

D'Hacqueville, Corbinelli, and M. and Madame de Coulanges, will agree with you in saying, I ought never to leave them again. It is, notwithstanding, true, that had it not been for you and my son, I should have continued my solitary way of life with pleasure: I enjoyed myself more in one day, than I can do here in a fortnight. I prayed and read a great deal; talked of the other world, and the method of going there. The Father Prior has more sense than I thought he had, though I always found him a very worthy creature. In short, I am now once more got into the vortex.

I must wait on M. Colbert on the subject of your pension: d'Hacqueville will take me to him, as soon as that Minister has returned to Paris, and will thus save me a trip to Versailles: so much for Madame, now for Monsieur. You must know, then, that his ill fortune had sent him to the banks of the Meuse; when his good fortune interfered and gave him the rheumatism in his thigh and his hip, which is so painful to him, that he cannot bear his own weight. He is now at Charleville, and entreats me to request leave of absence for him: I must thus again

wait on M. de Louvois, and this is another business on my hands! Had not I reason, my beauty, to complain of my children, and even to rail at them?

M. de Coulanges had written you a very pretty letter interspersed with verse in many places, in which he told you all the care and attentions which have been paid to Madame de Coulanges in her illness; and that the Marquise de La Trousse, who had stayed at Berry, on the news of her being dangerously ill, was the only person who had like to have died with grief, on learning the account of her resurrection [1]. This circumstance, though the invalid had often laughed at it, presented itself to her imagination in this instance, accompanied by a certain black vapour, so that she reprobated it in the strongest terms; and her husband took the letter, rumpled it together, and threw it into the fire. We were astonished at what happened; he has now written another, which is flatter than the paper itself. The first he wrote was admirable; we considered it as worthy to be preserved, as a model on such occasions.

M. de La Vallière is dead; several operations were performed upon him; and he is gone at last. Sister Louise de la Miséricorde [2] sent a petition to the King, praying that the government may be reserved for payment of his debts, without mentioning his nephews. The King has granted her request, and has desired she might be informed, that were he a person of sufficient piety to visit so holy a Carmelite, he would go in person to tell her how much he shares in her loss. Madame de Soubise has returned from Flanders; I have seen her, and returned her visit to me, on my arrival in Paris from Brittany. I thought her very handsome, except the circumstance of the loss of a

[1] The Marquise de La Trousse was so jealous of the pretended attachment of her husband to Madame de Coulanges, that it was thought this piece of wit might safely be hazarded.

[2] Françoise-Louise de La Baume-le-Blanc, Duchess de La Vallière, then a nun in the Carmelites, of the Rue Saint Jacques in Paris, was sister of Jean-François de La Baume-le-Blanc, Governor and Grand Senéschal of the Province of Bourbonnois, who died 13th October, 1676.

front tooth, which has a sad effect; her husband is in perfect health, and as gay as a lark. The *great lady* has had an explanation with *Quanto,* and has shown how incapable she was of encouraging a new flame. It is impossible to enjoy a greater degree of health than she now does; great changes may happen before the end of another day: in short, she is now at the highest pitch of happiness; she has received four hundred louis-d'ors for the dresses for Villers-Cotterets, where the St.-Hubert holidays are to be spent; it is thought this party may be broken up, and that nothing is certain respecting it, but the great expense the ladies have been put to. She has been silly enough to dip deep with the silk-mercer; she would have done better had she spent part of her money in something else; as it is impossible to buy a new face, dress is thrown away upon her. It is said, Mademoiselle d'Elbeuf told MONSIEUR, that Madame de Richelieu paid the Duc a compliment, on MADAME's being brought to-bed of a daughter; this has occasioned swarms of sayings and contradictions, goings and comings, and justifications, which do not all weigh a grain.

I sent you a long discourse of Father Le Bossu about the moon; I think it was in the packet of the twenty-fifth which miscarried, for which I am still heartily sorry. I long exceedingly to hear you speak about setting out: I think your best way will be to proceed on to Orléans; it is but a day's journey further: you will there find Beaulieu, who will have a carriage ready for you; and the next morning, be assured, I will not fail to send mine to receive you: that of Orléans will bring your people, with all your luggage. Farewell, my dearest: think of the execrable road from Grignan to Montélimart. I am heartily sorry you have suffered so much from the importunities of your M. de C***: he is as black as a mole, and as blind too: I think I see your despair; it is impossible to be master of a foot of land, without being plagued with a thousand of those impertinent visits.

LETTER 467

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Wednesday, October 21, 1676.

Good heavens, my child! is it possible you should imagine the world disapproves of your coming to see me, or that any human being could be surprised at your leaving M. de Grignan, for so short a time, in order to give me this proof of your love? I am sure it would be much more difficult to justify the contrary conduct, and it would puzzle your friends a great deal more to find an excuse for this, than to defend the journey you are about to take. Make yourself easy, therefore, on that subject, and be assured, you cannot give a stronger testimony of your discretion and good sense, than by showing the affection you bear me on this occasion. D'Hacqueville will tell you his sentiments of the business; and as M. de Grignan must by this time have set out for the Assembly, I begin to see the day of your departure.

Madame de Verneuil will pass her All-Saints' Day at Lyons; she asked me, whether she might not expect to meet you. I told her, it was not impossible. Amonio is going there likewise; should you stumble upon him, I doubt not but you will give him a handsome reception. I am now writing to M. de Grignan, and to his Grace the Archbishop, to solicit their interest and support on my side, against you. I am in no small perplexity; I have been to ask leave of absence for my son, who is ill with the rheumatism at Charleville: M. de Louvois told me, very obligingly, that, if I wished it, he would ask the King; but at the same time that my son would, by such a request, not only very ill make his court to His Majesty, but would even run the risk of a refusal; that the little Villars, and many others, had actually experienced a denial; that his advice to him was, to get cured quietly at Charleville; that,

had M. de Schomberg's certificate been taken of his case, when with the army, there would have been no doubt of his obtaining leave to come home; but that a simple letter would produce no effect. I have informed him of all this, and at this moment have received a letter, in which, without having waited for mine, he tells me he is to set out with a friend, who is likewise coming home, and that he will be with me to-morrow. I fear he will bring himself into a scrape in consequence of this; I will not fail to let you know. Father Le Bossu will be pleased to hear what you say of him. His *Art Poétique* is much admired; you felt all its beauty without knowing to whom you were indebted for so much gratification. You will here find a translation of St.-Augustine, *On predestination, and the perseverance of the righteous.* Our friends have come off in triumph in this work; it is really the most beautiful and the boldest piece that ever was written. You will see, likewise, in another style, Benserade's *Rondeaus*; they are very different in merit; and, perhaps, were the good to be separated from the bad, the former would be reduced to a very inconsiderable number; this printing is a strange affair.

I am going to tell you an extraordinary circumstance. Some folks send money to their husbands when in the army; Saint-Géran sends money home to his wife; he tells her, that if she does not lay out the nine hundred livres he has sent her in clothes, he will not return home from his winter-quarters, so that the little lady has dealt largely with the mercer, according to the intention of the donor. Madame de Soubise has appeared with her husband at Court with two coifs and one tooth less, so that there is not a word to be said. One of her front teeth was a little injured, and now it is entirely gone, leaving nothing but an immense gap, like that of the fat Abbé's; it is a sad loss, though she seems to think nothing of it. The journey to Villers-Cotterets is set aside; but it seems the King is kind enough to allow the ladies to appear at Versailles in their new dresses. But what is most astonishing, is the

prodigious expense those ladies are at, without a penny but what His Majesty supplies them with.

I seem to see you wandering over your meadows, like some shepherdess without her swain, solitary and tranquil, and very different from the continual agitation of these ladies: your mind enjoys perfect repose and serenity, and all your thoughts are hushed to peace, in comparison with the everlasting hurry of this country. But what is a shepherdess when absent from her swain? Your example will be the best answer in the world to this question. Madame de Coulanges is still troubled with returns of her fever, which gives great uneasiness, though it is almost the constant attendant on violent attacks. Langlade has returned from Frêne, where he has been in still greater danger than Madame de Coulanges. I have paid him a visit, and must own he is charmingly lodged in the suburb. Madame de La Fayette has returned from St.-Maur; she has had three regular fits of the quartan ague, a circumstance at which, she says, she is quite delighted, as her disorder will now have a name.

Five in the afternoon.

Do you know where I am? I defy you to guess. I have come in the finest weather imaginable to dine with our Sisters in the suburb: you think I mean the Faubourg St. Jacques; no, it is the Faubourg St.-Germain. Here I have received your letter of the fourteenth. I am now in the handsomest house in Paris, in Mademoiselle Raymond's enchanting apartment, fitted up for her as benefactress to the house; she is at liberty to go out when she pleases, but she seldom stirs, as her principal object is her journey to Paradise. I shall bring you here, both as a relic that belonged to my grandmother, and a person of curiosity, that must be pleased to see a delightful country-seat; you will really be charmed with it. I am, therefore, going to answer your letter from here. And first of all, I conjure you to decide in my favour, and to hesitate no

longer about taking the journey you promised, and which, in reality, you owe me. I am not the only one who thinks you are too irresolute about granting me that pleasure. Set out therefore, set out; you must certainly have taken your measures from the time of M. de Grignan's departure. I embrace him, and entreat you to give him my letter; I recommend to you, at the same time, that of his Grace the Archbishop, and cannot help saying, I trust more to them than to yourself, for a decision.

I have said as you did with respect to the regulation; there is no necessity to tell them, that when they are ill, they cannot attend the Assembly; this follows of course, and likewise, that if they are there, they will certainly be at the opening of it; that would be silly indeed! They will not be there at all, for it is not a place where people drop in by accident. I had corrected this article, without, however, changing the sense; but d'Hacqueville chose rather to have it sent away immediately, than to wait a week longer, alleging that the Bishops, who were your friends, would find no difficulty in the matter, which those who were not, always would: the Controller, at least, can never be supposed to fail in it; but really this affair vexes me. Do not you admire the brilliancy and power occasioned by the reflection of the sun? *Se mi miras, me miran*: shall we never receive a single ray? I said yesterday to the son of an unfortunate person [1], that if with his transcendent merit and valour, which even pierce through the gloom of his distress, he had the same good fortune which others have experienced, a temple would have been erected to him. So far I am right, but then this very circumstance would have spoiled him.

You have reason to say you could not possibly form to yourself an idea of Madame de Coulanges in the agony of death, or of M. de Coulanges in affliction. Neither could I have believed it, had I not witnessed it: liveliness on a death-bed, and gaiety in tears, are things altogether incredible. The poor soul had another fit yesterday: there

[1] The Comte de Vaux.

is no escaping at once from such disorders. When I reflect that, at the end of ten months, my hands are still swollen, I can hardly forbear laughing; for as to pain, that has long been over. I shall warn Corbinelli to beware how he reasons with you, unless in due form; for he is so perfectly mad, that we are not safe with him. He is now busy writing rondeaus on the recovery of Madame de Coulanges; I am to correct them, so you may judge of the perfection of the composition. Adieu, my dear child, set out, I beseech you, and come to me; be decided for once, and cease to animadvert upon the propriety of your journey; be assured there is no inconsistency in it: I am not singular in my opinion; everybody agrees with me.

The Abbé de Pontcarré showed me yesterday what you wrote him about the cloak he gave away so rashly; it is very amusing. The conduct of our Cardinal is, without doubt, admirable; accordingly the world does him justice, and he has no reason to be dissatisfied with the honour he has reaped from it.

LETTER 468

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Friday, October 23, 1676.

Here is the second volume of the *frater* for you. I sent a carriage for him yesterday to Bourget, and came myself with another coach and six to meet him here, where I was not sure of his arrival so precisely; chance, however, which is sometimes droll enough, brought us all together at the end of the avenue; this circumstance of our punctuality made us laugh. We went in, embraced, talked of twenty different things at the same instant, asked each other questions without either hearing or waiting for an answer. In short, the interview was accompanied with the tumultuous joy, which commonly attends these first

moments. In the meantime the gentleman limps, cries out, boasts of a rheumatism, when he is not in my presence; for that it seems embarrasses him, and, as we have remarked of others, smothers half his complaints. In my delirium I said, and I firmly believed it, that my thigh was blue; it was that which was the most painful; I have therefore allowed him to say he has a blue thigh, provided he will own that he has a green head likewise. This you will say is a strange composition. Do not however mention this to Montgobert: she would not fail to make a bad use of it against the Baron this winter, who is preparing on his side to plague her. She writes the most diverting things imaginable both to him and me: yet we can see through all this good humour, that she is ill, which we are really very sorry for. My son will therefore remain here a few days, till the attestations necessary for procuring him his leave of absence arrive from Charleville, or till the troops that marched for the Meuse have returned, as they say they will; because, it seems the Duc de Zell, who threw us into this panic, is retired, and possibly is as much or more afraid than we are. Such is the situation of our Abbey; they heartily wish I were obliged to leave them, in order to meet you, for it seems there is no such thing as being happy without you. Surely you must be determined by this time, or you never will; at least you cannot doubt how earnestly I desire it. M. de Grignan must be on his way to the Assembly; in justice therefore, you ought to be on your journey: were this the case, I should be less sorry for the loss of this letter, at least, than the large packet of the twenty-fifth, for which I am still vexed. If you find my hand somewhat unsteady, you need be under no apprehension on that account, it is only because my fingers are benumbed with the cold. Adieu, my dearest, I resign the pen to *the lame gentleman.* It was said the other day, that an advertisement had been published, to know what had become of M. de Luxembourg's army, and that the great Condé said, when he set out, *A fine command truly! and will last, I presume, till the month of*

July! They say too, that M. de Luxembourg [1] has made a better funeral panegyric on M. de Turenne than even M. de Tulle, and that Cardinal de Bouillon will give him an Abbey. The manner in which you express yourself of the Cardinal, "free from sacrilege in the Conclave, and even from a peccadillo on the road," is admirable.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*
(Enclosed in his Mother's letter.)

I am now settled in this place, almost as well as you could wish. I have a blue thigh, it is true; but I can by no means agree to the story of the green head. I should be glad, however, to exchange the blueness of the one for a little verdure on the other; I am sure I should walk with a much better grace. I have received your letter, my dear little sister, and thank you for your care and solicitude about me. If I am not mistaken, we shall be very happy together this winter: yet, for all that, remember I told you I should never forget your interested heart; saving this circumstance, I shall have a tolerable good opinion of you, in spite of your irresolution, of which I have heard a great many impertinent things: we will scold you at a more convenient time: only come and see my dear good little mama, who is wonderfully well, and as handsome as an angel. If you say your coming is therefore in no degree necessary for the recovery of her health, I would have you to know it is very much so for the preservation of it; which comes to the same thing.—"*Come, Queen of the Gods—come, gracious Cybele, come* [2]." You will, indeed, pass well enough with us for one descended from the skies; but even should you come without any equipage, you would not feel as if you had dropped from the clouds; our dear pretty mamma has provided for everything. Adieu, my

[1] Maréchal de Luxembourg experienced in those days what happens to most great men. He was at first exposed to the arrows of envy and ill-nature, till at length both were silenced by his victories, and gave place to panegyrics and universal admiration.

[2] A verse in the opera of *Atys*.

beautiful little sister! my compliments and respects to M. de Grignan a thousand times.

Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *continues and concludes her letter to her Daughter.*

I am a fool; I have committed a sin against geography: you do not come by Moulins at all, the Loire does not go that way. I ask your pardon for my impertinence: but come, and scold and laugh at me at the same time.

LETTER 469

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Wednesday, October 28, 1676.

It is impossible to be more surprised than I am, at learning that M. de La Garde's marriage is broken off! It is broken off! Good God! did not you hear the scream I gave? The whole forest has repeated it, and I find myself happy in being in a place where I have no witness of my astonishment but the echoes. When I get to town, I can put on the air and mien of a friend, without difficulty. I approved of this marriage on account of the great regard I have for him; and for the same reason, I change my opinion, as he has done. Would to God he was disposed to accompany you! he would be the very person I could wish, of all others, to be your conductor.

I am astonished the Assembly is not yet opened. M. de Pomponne was of opinion, it would take place on the fifteenth of this month. So you are to pass the holidays at Grignan; but when these are over, will not you then, my child, think of setting out? But I have harped so long on this string, and you know so well what would give me pleasure, that I shall say no more about it. The *frater* is still here, waiting the attestations which are to procure him his leave of absence. He limps, takes medicines, and though

we are threatened with all the severity of the ancient discipline, we yet live content, hoping we shall not be hanged. We chat and read; my gossip, who sees I stay here purely out of love to him, complains of the rains, and omits nothing which he thinks may divert me; and to say the truth, he succeeds to a miracle.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*

(Enclosed in his Mother's letter.)

The daughter of my lord *Alcantor* then refuses to marry my lord *Sganarelle*, who is no more than five or six and fifty [1]: I am very sorry for it, everything was fixed, and all the expense defrayed. I imagine there was some obstacle which we were not aware of; the Chevalier *de la Gloire* [2] will no longer be uneasy about it, that is one comfort. My mother stays here purely out of regard for me, who am a poor criminal daily threatened with the Bastille, or else with being cashiered. I am in hope, however, that everything will be quieted by the sudden return of the troops. My present condition were enough to bring this to pass; but this, it seems, is out of fashion. I do what I can to console my mother, both in regard to the bad weather, and for her leaving Paris; but she refuses to hear me when I mention this point. She is always reminding me of the care I took of her in her illness, and, as far as I can guess from her conversation, she is vexed that my rheumatism is not general, and that I have not a continual fever, that she might have an opportunity of showing her affection for me, and the extent of her gratitude. It would please her exceedingly, could she once see me reduced to the necessity of confession; but unluckily it is not likely to happen this time, so she must be contented with seeing me limp about, as M. de La Rochefoucauld was wont to do, though he now walks as nimbly as any one. We are in hopes of seeing you soon, so do not deceive us,

[1] *Vide* Molière's *Mariage Forcé*, Scene 2nd.

[2] The Chevalier de Grignan.

and let us have no more trifling; they say you are much given to this sin. My beautiful little sister, adieu, I embrace you with all imaginable truth and cordiality.

LETTER 470

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Friday, October 30, 1676.

I receive, my dear child, with the highest sense of your regard for me, what you tell me, with a view to strengthen both my heart and my mind against the evils of life, to which, I own, I cannot easily submit: nothing can be more rational, or more worthy of the character of a Christian. I see your constant care is to preserve my splenetic feelings in good order; and perhaps the calm precepts of wisdom you teach me, are no less salutary than pleasures of a more joyous nature. I will, however, put an end to this lecture, not because I have little to say upon the subject if I wished to expatiate upon my sentiments, but because I am sensible it is not a proper one for a letter.

We are told wonders of the good qualities of the new Pope[1]; all the credit of this choice falls to our friend Cardinal de Retz. As for M. de Paris (de Harlay), the wonders we hear of him are of a very opposite nature: he has got the better of the commissaries, whose consciences were more delicate than his, in establishing the point, that the King has a right to nominate the Abbesses of several

[1] Benoît Odescalchi, Innocent XI., elected September 21. As he was the son of a banker, Pasquin said, "Invenerunt hominem sedentem in telonio." Voltaire says, he was a virtuous man, a wise pontiff, little of a theologian, but a courageous, firm, and liberal prince. He had a long quarrel with Louis XIV. A speech, remarkable for simplicity, is related of him, which proves that he was no great Latinist. His secretary was reading some bulls he had drawn up, and explained them to him in Italian: the Pope wept with joy, and exclaimed; "Che cosa diranno di noi nella posterità, quando vedranna cosi bella latinità nostra!" ["What fine things posterity will say of us, when it sees our beautiful Latin!"—Translation.]

nunneries, and particularly those of the order of the Cordelières, and it is already begun to be put in practice, to the great scandal and offence of everybody. The four commissaries who were against it, are Pussort, Boucherat, Pommereuil, and Fieubet. Six of the nuns of Chelles have been selected to be Abbesses in different places: La d'Oradour, it seems, is not of the number, which mortifies her completely, for she has the true spirit and turn for the stormy little Court of the cloisters.

I have been vexed to think of the little time M. de Grignan has been able to devote to his family; neither the expense nor the business of his situation have known the smallest intermission. I think Provence so subject to commotions, and the presence of its Governors, of course, so highly necessary, that I tremble lest he should not obtain leave of absence. I shall say no more about your departure; you tell me it depends wholly on God and myself: of my wishes and my decisions, you cannot entertain the smallest doubt, so that the affair, on the contrary, rests wholly on God and you; let me beseech you, therefore, my child, not to oppose his designs, but frankly follow the dictates of your heart, and even of your reason. Reproaches sting me to the soul; which I think you will easily admit, when I tell you, that I would sacrifice, if it were necessary, my dearest hopes to them. You are reasonable, and what is more, you love me; you know what you wish, what you can effect, and what is proper for you, better than I do: it is for you to decide, and I am certain M. de Grignan and the Archbishop will consent to anything you propose to them. Adieu, my dearest: I am not disposed to enter upon any other subject; we are still in our forest: we read Saint-Augustine, and are become true converts to *predestination* and *perseverance*.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*
(*Enclosed in his Mother's letter.*)

I cannot allow that we are converted yet, and I will tell you why: we are both of opinion, that the arguments

of the Semipelagians are extremely solid, and full of good sense, while those of Saint-Paul and Saint-Augustine seem so many fine-spun cobwebs, more worthy of the Abbé Têtu, than of them. We could have put up with religion tolerably well, if these two saints had never written; but this is a continual stumbling-block. Adieu, my pretty little sister: make haste and come to us; I shall be heartily glad to see you, if I am not hanged before you arrive.

LETTER 471

From Madame DE SÉVIGNÉ *to Madame* DE GRIGNAN.

Livry, Wednesday, November 4, 1676.

Nothing can be more true than the proverb, which says, that liberty is destroyed by uncertainty. Were you under any sort of restraint, you would have determined what to do long ago, and not have been like Mahomet's coffin, suspended between heaven and earth; one of the load-stones would certainly, by this time, have got the better of the other. You would no longer be *dragooned,* which is a very unpleasant state. The voice you heard, in passing the Durance, exclaiming, *Ah, mother*! *mother*! would pierce to Grignan: or at least, that which counselled you to leave it, would not haunt you at Briare: for which reason I maintain, that nothing can be more opposite in its nature to liberty, than indifference, and indecision. Can it be possible that the sage La Garde, who has, it seems, resumed all his wonted wisdom, has likewise lost his free will? is he incapable of advising you? can he be at a loss to decide in this important point? you have seen that I decide like one of the councils. But how is it that La Garde, who is coming to Paris himself, cannot contrive that his journey may take place at the same time as yours? If you do come, it would be no bad thought to take the way of Sully; the little Duchess would certainly convey you as

far as Nemours; at least, you would find some friend or other, from day to day, so that you would have a relay of friends, till you found yourself in your own apartment. You would have met with a better reception last time, but your letter came so late that you took everybody by surprise, and had nearly missed me, which would have been a fine circumstance indeed; but we will contrive to keep clear of this inconvenience in future. I cannot help praising the *Chevalier*[1], who arrived in Paris on Friday evening, and dined here on Saturday; was it not very good of him? I was delighted to see him, and I assure you we spoke with great freedom of your scruples. I am now going to take a trip to Paris. I must see M. de Louvois on your brother's account, who is still here without leave, which vexes me not a little. I want to talk to M. Colbert likewise, about your pension: these two visits are all I have to make. I have some thoughts of going to Versailles, but will acquaint you whether I do so or not. In the meantime, we have the finest weather imaginable; the country has yet put on none of its horrors, and St.-Hubert has favoured the hunter extremely.

We are still reading Saint-Augustine, with pleasure: there is something so great and noble in his ideas, that all the mischief that weak minds can possibly receive from his doctrine, falls infinitely short of the good which others may derive from the perusal. You will imagine I give myself the airs of a learned lady; but when you see in what a familiar style this is written, you will cease to wonder at my capacity. You tell me that if you did not love me a great deal more than you say, you should love me very little: I am strangely tempted to scold you for this, even though I should risk the saying an unkind or an uncivil thing: but no; I am fully persuaded you love me; and God knows much better than it is possible for you to do, what a strong affection I entertain for you. I am glad to hear Pauline is like me, she will serve to put you in mind of me. "*Ah, mother! there is no need of that.*"

[1] De Grignan.

Monsieur DE SÉVIGNÉ *also writes to his Sister.*
(Enclosed in his Mother's letter.)

When I think M. de La Garde is with you at the time you receive your letters, I tremble lest he should spy over your shoulder the nonsense I wrote you [1] some days ago. This makes me shudder, and I cannot help crying out, "Ah, sister! sister! were I as much at my own disposal as you are, and heard a voice as you did, exclaim, *Ah, mother*! *mother*! it would not be long before I was in Provence." I cannot for my soul conceive what it is that makes you hesitate: you give whole years to M. de Grignan, and to all the family of the Grignans: after this, what law can be so cruel as to hinder you from giving the poor pittance of four months to your own family? Never was law of Knighthood, which the redoubted Sancho Pança swore by, half so severe; and if Don Quixote had a writer of equal gravity with M. de La Garde to celebrate his exploits, he would certainly have permitted his squire to change steeds with the Knight of Mambrino's helmet. Embrace, therefore, the opportunity of M. de La Garde, since he is now actually with you; settle the affair of your journey in concert, and know, that you have other duties to fulfill, besides what you owe M. de Grignan. We have no doubt of your heart, but this alone is not sufficient; we want proofs. Divide your favours, therefore, between both hemispheres, like the sun, which enlightens the world with his beneficent beams. Is not this an excellent argument to show you ought not to stay where you are? Adieu, my pretty little sister! my thigh is still blue, and I fear will continue so, all the winter.

[1] See Letter 469, of 28th October, 1676, in this volume.

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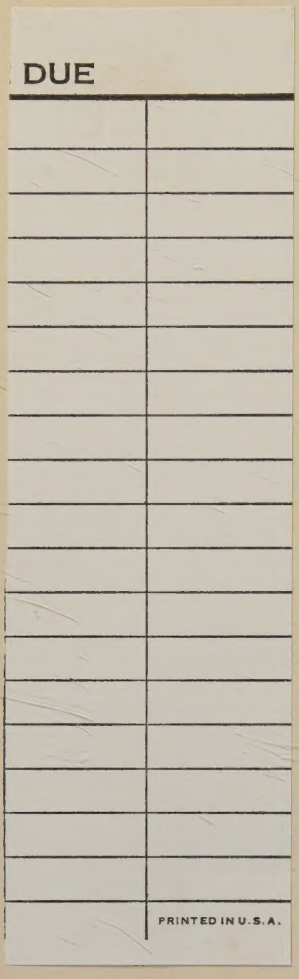

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